MOSCOW ART THEATRE PLAYS

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THE MOSCOW ART
THEATRE SERIES
OF RUSSIAN PLAYS

AS GAIEFF IN TCHEHOFF'S "THE CHERRY ORCHARD"

Saharoff, Moscow

AS COLONEL VERSHININ IN TCHEHOFF'S "THE THREE SISTERS"

STANISLAVSKY IN TWO OF HIS FAVORITE RÔLES AT THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE
SERIES OF RUSSIAN PLAYS

EDITED BY OLIVER M. SAYLER

TSAR FYODOR IVANOVITCH

BY COUNT ALEXEI TOLSTOY

THE LOWER DEPTHS

BY MAXIM GORKY

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

BY ANTON TCHEKHOFF

THE THREE SISTERS

BY ANTON TCHEKHOFF

UNCLE VANYA

BY ANTON TCHEKHOFF

English translation by JENNIE COVAN

NEW YORK
BRENTANOS
PUBLISHERS

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TSAR FYODOR IVANOVITCH

BY

COUNT ALEXEI TOLSTOY

INTRODUCTION

It is fitting that the Moscow Art Theatre Series of Russian Plays, published in English translation under the sponsorship of Morris Gest for the benefit of the patrons of this foremost playhouse of the European continent on its visit to America, should be introduced with Count Alexei Tolstoy's spectacular historical tragedy, "Tsar Fyodor Ivanovitch." The works of Gorky and Tchekhoff, likewise included in this series, are more or less familiar, but "Tsar Fyodor" reaches print here for the first time in our language.

For those who are not close students of Russian literature, it is well to identify the author of "Tsar Fyodor" as the elder cousin of Count Lyoff Tolstoy and a poet and dramatist whose plays are more highly esteemed by Russian critics than those of his more versatile, provocative and celebrated relative. Born in 1817 and dying in 1875, his fame rests chiefly on a dramatic trilogy from Russian history: "The Death of Ivan the Terrible" (1866), "Tsar Fyodor Ivanovitch" (1875), and "Tsar Boris" (1870).

Spanning three successive reigns, from 1533 to 1604, this trilogy dramatizes an epoch in Russian history roughly parallel to the height of Tudor power in England. The most human, pathetic and moving of these three plays is "Tsar Fyodor," whose action is set midway in that weak but pious monarch's rule, 1584-1598. Russia had been exhausted by the bloody fanaticism of Ivan the Terrible, whose insane temper had done to death his elder and abler son. Fyodor, the younger, succeeded to

the throne, only to find his realm torn wide open by factional fights among the *boyars,* headed on the one hand by his imperial chancellor, Boris Godunoff, and on the other by Prince Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky, with prince and princess, priest and peasant, as mere pawns in the struggle. Striving passionately to compose these feuds, but powerless in his vacillation to affect their course, he is one of the most appealing figures in all historical drama.

Around this amazing character study, the dramatist has woven a gorgeous medieval tapestry of word and action. "Tsar Fyodor" is like nothing so much in our language as the Shakespearean chronicles of Plantagenet, Lancastrian, York and Tudor. As the English poet revived the colorful entourages of departed reigns for the sake of the opportunity to depict character among the various Richards and Henrys, so the Russian poet has herein restored the entire pageantry of the court of an ancient Tsar.

The task of restoring to life this pageant of a picturesque and bygone age has been still further perfected by the Moscow Art Theatre's mastery of makeup and psychological realism. With this play, the theatre opened its first season a quarter of a century ago. In its repertory it has remained ever since. Through it, America first becomes acquainted with the work of this astonishing organization. Russia's vivid past breathes once more through the necromancy of her contemporary artists.

"Tsar Fyodor" was written in verse. It has been thought wiser, however, to employ a simple, straightforward prose in this translation in order to avoid undue exaggeration of an already somewhat florid narrative, as judged by current standards. THE EDITOR.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

TSAR FYODOR IVANOVITCH — *Son of Ivan the Terrible.*
TSARINA IRINA FYODOROVNA —
His wife, sister of Godunoff.
BORIS FYODOROVITCH GODUNOFF — *Imperial Chancellor.*
PRINCE IVAN PETROVITCH SHOUISKY—
Cavalry Officer.
DIONISY — *Metropolitan of All the Russias.*
VARLAAM — *Archbishop of Krutits.*
IOFF — *Archbishop of Rostoff.*
COADJUTOR OF THE HOLY SYNOD.
ARCHIMANDRITE OF THE HOLY SYNOD.
COURT CHAPLAIN.
PRINCE VASSILY IVANOVITCH SHOUISKY—
Nephew of Prince Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky.
PRINCE ANDREI, PRINCE DIMITRY, PRINCE IVAN — *Of the Shouisky family.*
PRINCE MSTISLAVSKY, PRINCE KHVOROSTININ, PRINCE SHAKHOVSKOY, MIKHAILO GOLOVIN — *Officers of the Shouisky faction.*
ANDREI PETROVITCH LOUP-KLESHNIN —
Tsar Fyodor's former tutor, of the Godunoff faction.
PRINCE TUREYNIN — *Of the Godunoff faction.*
PRINCESS MSTISLAVSKAYA —
Niece of Prince Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky, fiancée of Prince Shakhovskoy.

VASSILISA VOLOKHOVA — *Marriage-broker.*

BOGDAN KURIUKOFF
IVAN KRASSILNIKOFF
GOLUB, SENIOR
GOLUB, JUNIOR
— *Delegates from Moscow, of the Shouisky faction.*

FEDIUK STARKOFF — *Aide-de-camp of Prince Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky.*

LUTE-PLAYER.

IMPERIAL GROOM.

A SERVANT OF BORIS GODUNOFF.

COURIER — *from the village of Tieshloff.*

COURIER — *from the village of Uglitch.*

MAN-OF-ARMS.

NOBLEMEN, NOBLEWOMEN, CHAMBERMAIDS, STEWARDS, DEACONS, POPES, PRIESTS, MERCHANTS, COUNTRY PEOPLE, ARCHERS, SERVANTS, BEGGARS, *and crowds.*

ACTION: — *The action takes place at Moscow, at the end of the Sixteenth Century.*

ACT ONE.

SCENE I.

The Home of Prince Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky.

At the extreme left is a table around which are grouped all the members of the Shouisky household, except Ivan Petrovitch and Vassily Ivanovitch.

Next to the Shouiskys are grouped the Coadjutor of the Holy Synod, the Archimandrite of the Holy Synod, and several other clerics. A few noblemen are also seated at the table, while others stroll around, chatting, in the background. To the right is a group of merchants and tradespeople; and there is, too, another table with tumblers and dishes at which Starkoff, Prince Ivan Petrovitch's Aide-de-Camp, stands waiting.

ANDREI SHOUISKY [*to the clerics*] Yes, yes, Reverend Fathers. I place great hopes upon the outcome of this affair. Godunoff really reigns — reigns through his sister. By her alone he stands to-day greater and stronger than all the nobles of this land. Already he handles Russia, people and lands and Holy Church, as if it were his own domain. Get rid of his sister — and we can manage him.

ARCHIMANDRITE. So Prince Ivan Petrovitch gave his consent?

ANDREI SHOUISKY. Very reluctantly! You see, he greatly pities the Tsarina. There will be a wedding in my family. My niece is going to be Prince Shakhovskoy's bride — with joy and laughter — while grief will stalk

through the imperial palace when I shall tear apart Tsar and Tsarina.

COADJUTOR. Prince Ivan is very soft-hearted.

DIMITRY SHOUISKY. That's his nature. On the battlefield like a lion! But let him take off his uniform, and you would not imagine him to be the same man!

GOLOVIN. But how did he finally give his consent?

ANDREI SHOUISKY. Thanks to Prince Vassily who *made* him give it.

GOLOVIN. No good can come of it. My opinion is: if you do a thing, do it thoroughly — or not at all.

ANDREI SHOUISKY. And what would *you* do?

GOLOVIN. I would simplify matters. But this is not the time to talk of it. Shh! Here he is now!

[*Enter Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky referred to hereafter as Ivan who has a paper in his hand.*]

IVAN. Reverend Fathers! Princes! Nobles! My respects to you — and to you, too, merchants! At last I have decided. No longer can we tolerate Godunoff. We of the faction of Shouisky are patriots. We are ready to fight for our fatherland, our church, the welfare and future of Russia, while Godunoff's success spells Russia's ruin. We shall not permit it. It is between him and us. Read, Vassily Ivanovitch.

VASSILY SHOUISKY [*reading*] "To the Almighty Prince of All the Russias, our Ever-Victorious Tsar, the Emperor Fyodor Ivanovitch! We, the clerics, princes, nobles, and merchants of all Russia, address you, Majesty! Have mercy upon us, your subjects! Your Tsarina, a Godunoff by birth, has borne you no children, while a great misfortune has befallen your brother, Dimitry Ivanovitch. And should you, through the will of God, be taken from us, your dynasty would become extinct and your kingdom orphaned. Thus pity us, All-Powerful Emperor! Do not permit your father's throne to become

empty! For the sake of your race and for the welfare of your people, Almighty Emperor, be graciously pleased to take another wife unto yourself. Take for your Tsarina — "

IVAN. We will write the name in later on, after we and His Holiness have come to a decision. Read on.

VASSILY SHOUISKY [*continuing*] "Send your childless Tsarina into a convent, as your late father, the Almighty Prince Ivan Vassilitch, decreed. And to this, the humble prayer of All the Russias, we have to-day affixed our signatures."

IVAN [*to the noblemen*] Are you all willing to sign?

THE NOBLES. Yes!

IVAN [*to the clerics*] And you, Reverend Fathers?

THE COADJUTOR. His Holiness sends his blessings and commands us to join forces with you.

ARCHIMANDRITE. No longer shall Godunoff be permitted to overrule Our Lord's Holy Church.

IVAN [*to the merchants*] And you?

MERCHANTS. Your Grace, who are we, not to follow where you lead? We have been suffering under a great disadvantage ever since Godunoff exempted the English traders from paying taxes.

IVAN [*takes his pen*] Forgive me, Lord God! It is for the welfare of our people that I lay this crime upon my soul!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Come, come, uncle. Why call it a crime? It is not through enmity to Irina that you propose doing away with her, but to strengthen the throne of Russia.

IVAN. True! I shall do away with her to destroy Boris Godunoff. Why torture my soul about it? My path is not without thorns.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Why, uncle — ? What attraction can Irina find in worldly pomp? Compared to

heavenly bliss, everything else seems tawdry and vain to her.

IVAN. I repeat, my path is not without thorns. But I shall not turn back. It is better that the Tsarina, though innocent, should perish than our country. [*Signs*] Sign — all of you! [*They all sign. Ivan goes to one side, and Prince Shakhovskoy joins him.*]

SHAKHOVSKOY. Your Grace, when will you permit me to see my fiancée?

IVAN. That's your one and only worry — your fiancée! Can't you wait? Be patient. She will come down with the others to greet you.

SHAKHOVSKOY. Your Grace, you never let me see her except when there are other people present.

IVAN. And you would like to see her alone, I know. You are young, Prince, and I am a man of conventions. I hold conventions to be not only the basis of national, but also of family life.

SHAKHOVSKOY. And were you living up to your own conventions that time in Pskoff when Zamoisky tried to kill you, and when after you had caught him red-handed, you challenged him to a duel as if he were an honest man?

IVAN. Zamoisky was not a pink-cheeked maiden, and I was not betrothed to him. There is no shame in meeting one's enemy in single combat.

[*Shakhovskoy walks away and Golovin joins Ivan.*]

GOLOVIN [*in an undertone*] The matter could be settled more easily and speedily, should you so wish, Your Grace. The inhabitants of Uglitch are thinking of Dimitry Ivanovitch.

IVAN. Well — what of it?

GOLOVIN. They say in Moscow that Fyodor is weak in body, soul, and spirit — so — if you . . .

IVAN. Take care, Mikhailo Golovin, lest I should guess what you are driving at.

GOLOVIN. Your Grace . . .

IVAN. For the present I let your insinuations pass in one ear and out the other. But should you speak of it again, before God! I shall tell the Tsar!

[*Princess Mstislavskaya enters in full evening dress, followed by two handmaidens and Volokhova, carrying a tray with tumblers. All bow to the Princess.*]

VASSILY SHOUISKY [*softly to Golovin*] You certainly guessed wrong when you tried to make a tool of Ivan Petrovitch — Why — he would rather let himself be torn to pieces! Stop this nonsense.

GOLOVIN. If he were only willing —

VASSILY SHOUISKY. If! If my grandmother had a beard she would be my grandfather!

IVAN. And now, dear guests, take the glasses which my niece will offer you.

[*Volokhova hands the tray to the Princess who serves the guests, bowing to them.*]

SHAKHOVSKOY [*to the Princess, in a whisper, after accepting the glass which she hands him*] Will you permit me to see you very soon?

[*The Princess turns away.*]

VOLOKHOVA [*in a whisper to Shakhovskoy*] To-morrow night — by the garden gate —

IVAN [*lifting the tumbler which Starkoff hands him*] First let us drink to the health of our Tsar and Sovereign, Fyodor Ivanovitch. May he be our ruler for many a year to come!

ALL TOGETHER. Long life to the Tsar!

IVAN. And now permit me to drink your health, gentlemen!

PRINCE KHVOROSTININ. Prince Ivan Petrovitch! A

long time you shielded us against Latvia! Be now our shield against Boris Godunoff.

COADJUTOR. May the Lord God bless you, the defender of Holy Church!

ARCHIMANDRITE. The destroyer of Nebuchadnezzar!

MERCHANTS. Your Grace, you are to us a very bulwark of defense. We shall follow you through fire and flood.

PRINCE KHVOROSTININ. Prince! Allow us now to toast the young bride and groom.

ALL TOGETHER. Long may they live!

IVAN. I thank you, dear guests, I thank you. Though she is only my niece, she is to me like my own daughter. Princess! And you, Grigory! Bow your thanks, my children!

ALL [*drinking*] Long life to the handsome groom and his charming bride!

IVAN. Thank you all. [*To Mstislavskaya*] You may leave us now, Natasha. You are still a child, not yet used to these worldly affairs. Why — you are blushing like a rose! [*Kisses her gently on the forehead*] Go now, my dear.

[*The Princess, Volokhova and the Handmaidens leave. Volokhova, in passing Shakhovskoy.*]

VOLOKHOVA. Don't forget — near the garden gate — and don't forget my little present!

IVAN. We have no time to lose. Let us send this address at once to His Holiness, and then spread it broadcast throughout all Moscow.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. No gossiping — God forbid!

ALL. May God protect us!

IVAN. Forgive me, all of you! His Holiness will let us know when to present ourselves before the Tsar.

[*They move here and there, prepared to leave.*]

My path is not without thorns. To-day I understand how the man who fights against trickery cannot remain clean. The fight between truth and falsehood is uneven, unfair, and it is a most difficult task for an honest man to master the art of trickery. Fortunate is he who can face his enemies, openly, on the field of battle! Though thunder and lightning rage above his head, his soul is clean and certain of itself. To-day the knowledge that I am guilty of wrong is like a heavy stone upon my heart. But God is my witness that there are no other paths open to us. We can get no support from the Tsar. He is like soft putty in the hands of the man who knows how to fashion him. He is not our real ruler. Our real ruler is his brother-in-law, and all Russia clamors for protection against him! Russia looks to us — to us alone! There is no other choice! We need a falsehood to combat a falsehood! And may the crime which willingly I load upon my life haunt Godunoff's conscience! [*Leaves.*]

STARKOFF [*looking after him*] A falsehood to combat a falsehood! Very well. Then do not blame me, sir, if I, too, tell a falsehood and, by the same token, tell what is true of you.

SCENE II.

Room in the Imperial palace. Godunoff is sitting at a table deep in thought. Near him stands Loup-Kleshnin and Prince Tureynin. Starkoff stands waiting at the door.]

KLESHNIN [*to Starkoff*] And so you will testify to everything?

STARKOFF. To everything — absolutely everything, sir! You may bring me face to face with the Tsar at once, if such be your wish!

KLESHNIN. Very well. Go, my dear fellow. We are satisfied.

[*Starkoff leaves.*]

KLESHNIN [*to Godunoff*] So that is how it stands? The sister is to be sent to a convent — and the brother is to be knifed! Led by His Holiness they will approach the Tsar!

GODUNOFF [*deep in thought*] Seven years have passed since Tsar Ivan's death. And now, when I may not even ward off the blow, whatever work I did for Russia is tumbling, and we shall again find ourselves plunged into the abyss as at the time of Tsar Ivan Vassilitch's death.

KLESHNIN. They are plotting and counter-plotting. Golovin, one of their henchmen, has won over the Nagi clan of Uglitch, and here they plan separating the Tsar from the Tsarina. So if they fail in one place, they are bound to succeed in the other; like a cat — if it cannot bite, it scratches!

TUREYNIN [*to Godunoff*] Sir, do not permit them to offer their respects in audience to the Tsar. You know what he is like — he cannot say "No" to priests.

KLESHNIN. You must take no risks. No wonder the late Tsar nicknamed him the sexton. Ah — Little Father Ivan Vassilitch! If you were alive to-day you would know how to deal with the Nagis and the Shouiskys!

GODUNOFF. Have we received no news from Uglitch?

KLESHNIN. None whatever. Just let Bitanovsky send us written evidence that Golovin corresponded with the Nagis, and then we shall know how to handle the Shouiskys.

TUREYNIN. And suppose he is double-crossing us?

KLESHNIN. No matter! With such evidence they are in our hands.

TUREYNIN. So much the better for us. I, on the

other hand, have an old account to settle with Prince Ivan Petrovitch. We were dying of hunger in Pskoff while we were exposed day and night to a rain of bullets, and I, out of sheer pity for the tradespeople who were perishing, advised them to open negotiations with the king of Batur. But Prince Ivan Petrovitch ordered the noose to be put about my neck, and I was pardoned, thanks only to the prayers of some pious pilgrims. I have not forgotten it, and I would give all I own if I could put the noose around *his* neck.

KLESHNIN. Bad luck to him! He is kindly to merchants and tradespeople and other such rogues — with us he is haughty. Ah — if only we could get the written evidence!

TUREYNIN [*to Godunoff*] Your fate hangs by a thread. You must decide!

GODUNOFF [*rising*] I have decided!

TUREYNIN. What?

GODUNOFF. To make peace.

TUREYNIN AND KLESHNIN [*together*] What? Peace with the Shouiskys?

GODUNOFF. To-morrow they and I shall become friends.

TUREYNIN. What? Give in to them? You are willing to divide the power with them?

KLESHNIN. Why, Little Father, have you lost your mind? You are letting the bull into the china shop!

GODUNOFF. When a great storm rages and the ship and all it contains is threatened with disaster, only a madman will refuse to throw overboard part of his treasure in order to save something from the wreck. Half of my rights I shall throw into the waves, but the ship itself I shall save!

KLESHNIN. How will you meet them? Will you be

the one to submit to them, or will you ask them to come to you? And who will make peace between you?

GODUNOFF. The Tsar himself.

[*A steward opens the door.*]

TUREYNIN. Here comes the Tsar.

[*Enter Tsar Fyodor, followed by the Imperial Groom.*]

FYODOR. Groom! Why did my horse balk?

GROOM. Your Majesty, you reached for your purse to give alms to a beggar; at the same moment, the horse darted forward, you pulled the reins, and the animal became frightened.

FYODOR. I was as much frightened as the horse. Groom, do not give him oats. Let him have only hay.

KLESHNIN. Tsar, if I were in your place, I would suggest putting the thumb-screws on the groom to teach him not to give wild horses to Your Majesty.

GROOM. Why, sir, how can this horse be wild? He is twenty-five years old! The late Tsar used to ride him!

FYODOR. Perhaps it was my own fault after all. I spurred him a little too much. You say he balked because he became frightened?

GROOM. Yes, Your Majesty, because he became frightened!

FYODOR. Well, then, this time I forgive him; but I will not ride him again. Pension him off — and give him his full share of oats until his death. [*Tsarina Irina comes in through the other door*] Good day, Irinushka!

IRINA. Good day, light of my soul! Are you tired?

FYODOR. Yes, yes, quite tired, I trotted steadily all the way from Andron. Right here, near the palace gate, the horse tried to throw me. But I mastered him. I spurred him so hard that he quieted down. Irinushka, I take it that dinner is ready?

IRINA. Yes, light of my soul, eat to your heart's content.

FYODOR. Of course, of course. We shall dine right away. The ride gave me a ravenous appetite. They have lovely chimes at Andron. I want to send for their sacristan, and have him show me how he handles them. . . . Irinushka, what a beauty I saw at Andron's house! Do you know who? Mstislavskaya! She is a niece of the Shouiskys. Have you seen her, brother-in-law?

GODUNOFF. No, your Majesty, for years I have not been on speaking terms with the Shouiskys.

FYODOR. What a pity, brother-in-law, what a great pity! . . . She is so tall and slender — and what a complexion!

IRINA. Aren't you a bit infatuated with her, Fyodor?

FYODOR. And — oh — what eyebrows!

IRINA. Really! You talk of her a great deal.

FYODOR. What of it, Irinushka? After all I'm not yet an old man. I can still attract women.

IRINA. Shame on you! She is engaged!

FYODOR. Yes, to Shakhovskoy. Brother-in-law, do you know Prince Grigory Shakhovskoy?

GODUNOFF. I used to know him, Your Majesty. But he is now an ally of the Shouiskys.

FYODOR. Brother-in-law, it grieves me to hear this; this one is allied with the Shouiskys, and that one is your ally! Will I ever live to see the day when one and all shall be Russia's allies?

GODUNOFF. It would make me happy, Your Majesty. I would not be the one to lag behind if I only knew how to make peace.

FYODOR. Really, brother-in-law? You mean it? Why didn't you tell me before? I shall make peace between you. To-morrow I shall bring you and Prince Ivan Petrovitch together.

GODUNOFF. I am ready, Your Majesty. But it seems to me . . .

FYODOR. Not another word! Don't you bother your head about it, Boris. You would not know how. Go on administering the country. That is a thing you know, and know well. But I shall attend to the other matter. For it demands a knowledge of the human soul. To-morrow, then, I shall make peace between you. And now let us go in to dinner. [*Turns toward doors, stops*] Listen, Irinushka; just the same, Mstislavskaya kept on looking on me in church!

IRINA. What can I do, Fyodor? It is to be my bitter destiny, evidently.

FYODOR [*embracing her*] Dear heart! Beloved! I was only jesting. Why — is there any one in all the world more lovely than you? Come, let us go and eat before our dinner gets cold.

[*Fyodor leaves, Irina following. Godunoff, Kleshnin, and Tureynin follow toward door.*]

KLESHNIN [*to Godunoff, leaving room*] So you are going to make peace, eh? And you will become friends with your deadliest foe?

TUREYNIN. The one who hates you most! And then what?

GODUNOFF. And then — we shall see!

[*They leave.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO.

Room in the Tsar's palace. Tsar Fyodor is sitting in a large arm-chair. To his right Irina is doing gold-thread embroidery on a frame. To the left, sitting in arm-chairs are: Dionisy, Metropolitan of Russia; Varlaam, Archbishop of Krutits; Ioff, Archbishop of Rostoff; Boris Godunoff. A number of nobles are at hand.

FYODOR. Most Reverend Father Dionisy! Reverend Father Ioff! And you, Father Varlaam! I sent for you, Reverend Sirs, to help me in an important matter; in other words, to assist me in making peace between two old foes. You know how long I have grieved over the fact that the Shouiskys, an honorable family, and Boris Godunoff, my esteemed brother-in-law, have been estranged by a useless feud. But apparently the Lord has listened to my prayers and has endowed Boris' heart with the spirit of humility. He himself promised me to-day to forget his enemies' deeds, and to be the first to offer his hand to the Shouiskys. Is that not so, brother-in-law?

GODUNOFF. It is my duty to bow to your wishes, Your Majesty.

FYODOR. Thank you, brother-in-law! You remember the Blessed Scriptures, and faithfully you observe their lessons. There is one thing, though, about Prince Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky which I wish to tell you. He is inclined to be a little harsh and proud and aggressive. So it would be better if you say as little as possible to

each other, and perhaps it would be best if you should go to him and shake his hand — like this — and tell him that everything is forgotten and that hereafter you wish to live in peace with him and his clan.

GODUNOFF. I am ready!

FYODOR. Thank you, brother-in-law! Do not forget — he is a warrior. He has grown up amidst the clang of battle, the roar of the cannons, the clash of steel, and the thud of lance and halberd. But he is a pious man for all that, and he will doubtless listen to friendly words. [*To Dionisy*] As for you, Most Reverend Father, as soon as they clasp hands, give them your blessing quickly, and speak to them encouraging words.

DIONISY. It is my duty, Your Majesty, as a servant of Christ's Holy Church, to bring to everybody the message of peace. Be this a religious matter or not, yet shall I try to win over Prince Shouisky.

FYODOR. Most Reverend Father, we stand ready, one and all, to defend the Church. Boris and I and Shouisky, we all are stanch supporters of the Faith.

DIONISY. All-Powerful Tsar, your zeal is well known to us, but unfortunately your will does not empower all decisions. [*Looks at Godunoff meaningly*] When our Holy Synod found some merchants of Novgorod guilty of heresy, they were permitted a few days later to go free and return to Novgorod and tempt the peasants with their evil doctrines.

GODUNOFF. Your Holiness, these merchants trade with German towns, and thus bring a great deal of profit to our government. Without them Novgorod would be ruined.

DIONISY. Is it for the sake of profit that heretics should be allowed to go unpunished?

GODUNOFF. God forbid, Most Reverend Father! The Tsar has already ordered his soldiers to arrest the pro-

pounder of these heresies. But the Tsar differentiates between tempter and tempted.

FYODOR. Of course, brother-in-law. And, Most Reverend Sir, even the tempters themselves should neither be punished nor tortured. They should answer for their sins to the Lord God. You yourself can exhort them. For, Reverend Sir, it is not without reason that they call you a wise theologian.

DIONISY. We try to do the best we can through exhortation. But you are not aware of all the facts. The bailiffs and tax and revenue collectors began to join churches and monasteries for their own ends, and they brought into play forgotten tricks and twists to influence the people.

GODUNOFF. Most Reverend Father, the Almighty Tsar has forestalled all your grievances. There will not arise in the future another occasion for us to take extreme measures. [*Hands him an official paper*] Here is the decree, Reverend Father, which will prevent these people from joining, for reasons of personal benefit, the monasteries and the organizations of Holy Church, and which transfers the jurisdiction in such cases from the imperial courts to the Church itself.

FYODOR. Yes, Reverend Father, he wrote it, and I affixed my seal to it.

DIONISY [*glancing at the document*] Blessed be the peace-makers! When the imperial chancellor promises to guarantee our statutory rights, exemptions and privileges, then all past grievances shall be forgotten.

FYODOR. Right, right, Reverend Father! Father Varlaam, come and assist His Holiness.

VARLAAM. Your Majesty, I shall second whatever His Holiness decides in this matter.

FYODOR. Father Ioff, I depend upon you, too.

IOFF. Your chancellor, Almighty Emperor, is both

kindly and wise, and it is our duty to pray to God for peace and good-will.

FYODOR. You, too, Irinushka, I shall ask to say a helpful word to Shouisky should he show himself obstinate. A word from a woman's lips means a great deal and softens a steely heart. I know from experience. I would never give in to a man, but just let a woman or child appeal to me, and I would gladly do anything.

IRINA. My Tsar and Lord, we shall do exactly as you command; but what weight has our word against yours? If you will only tell him firmly that their estrangement angers you, Prince Ivan Petrovitch will never dare to disregard your wishes.

FYODOR. Yes, yes, of course; I will instruct him, I will command him! And you, gentlemen, engage them quickly in conversation; do not remain silent. There is nothing worse for two adversaries who have come together in peace than for everybody to stand round and silently watch while they stare at each other. . . .

KLESHNIN. We would be grateful, Your Majesty, if the Prince of Shoui would permit us occasionally to open our mouths.

FYODOR. What do you mean — Prince of Shoui — ?

KLESHNIN. I mean that he behaves like an independent potentate, and not like a servant of Your Majesty.

KHVOROSTININ. Your Majesty, your former tutor cannot forgive the Shouiskys for siding with the Nagi faction.

GOLOVIN. There are some who wish to ask you to recall the Tsarievitch to Moscow.

FYODOR. Dimitry? I would be glad to! Dear lad! I feel he must be lonely there, while here I could cheer him up; I could take him to play and dance and bear-

fight! I have asked Boris time and again, but he tells me steadfastly that it cannot be done.

KLESHNIN. And he is right! It was not without reason that your late father exiled the Nagis to Uglitch. He knew the Nagis. He never allowed them too much liberty, and your brother-in-law, too, is watching them closely.

FYODOR. Petrovitch, Petrovitch, you are speaking against the uncles of the Tsarievitch!

KLESHNIN. The Tsarievitch? And how so? And I suppose his mother, her husband's seventh wife, was thus Tsarina? During your father's lifetime there were Tsarinas and to spare of her breed!

FYODOR. Come, come! Dimitry and I are brothers, and the Nagis are his uncles, so don't you dare criticize them in my presence.

KLESHNIN. Must I then praise them for wanting to overthrow you and put their own pretender upon the throne?

FYODOR. How dare you?

KLESHNIN. Must I also praise the Shouiskys for allying themselves with the Nagis?

FYODOR. I tell you — be silent, be silent! At once!

KLESHNIN [*walking toward window*] Very well, then. I shall not say another word!

FYODOR [*to Godunoff*] Next time, brother-in-law, do not allow him to criticize my brother and my stepmother.

GODUNOFF. Your Majesty, he is a simple man who means well. [*Yells are heard outside.*]

KLESHNIN [*looking from window*] Here they come.

FYODOR. Who?

NOBLES [*looking from window*] The Shouiskys!

FYODOR [*stepping to window*] What? They are here already?

KLESHNIN. Yes. They are already at the outer gate.

[*The yells grow louder*] See — first comes Ivan Petrovitch, surrounded by swarms of merchants! Listen — how they yell! They throw their hats into the air! They are pushing the archers out of the way! They have seized both Ivan's arms — they are leading him up the steps! Why — they do not show such enthusiasm even for their own Tsar!

FYODOR. Look here, brother-in-law, do not forget your promise. And you, Irinushka, watch carefully! Should matters not run smoothly, you must help. Reverend Father, I rely on you absolutely! [*Quickly resumes his seat.*]

STEWARD [*opening the door*] Prince Ivan Petrovitch!

[*Enter the Shouiskys; followed by Mstislavsky, Shakhovskoy, and others.*]

KLESHNIN [*in an undertone to Tureynin, glancing at the Shouiskys*] Just look at them! They do not even bow!

IVAN [*kneeling*] Almighty Tsar! We are here in obedience to your command!

FYODOR. Rise, Prince Ivan Petrovitch! Rise quickly! Do not kneel at my feet! [*Helps him to his feet*] The Tsarina and I have not seen you for a long time. You were doubtless busy with family affairs. I have been told that you are giving your niece in marriage?

IVAN. True, Your Majesty!

FYODOR. I am glad, very glad. I congratulate you. So, as I said to you before, it is a long time since we have seen you — but perhaps you have had no leisure? This wedding — I presume that is why you have not attended the Duma of late?

IVAN. Your Majesty, what business have I at the Duma as long as not the Duma but your brother-in-law settles the affairs of the empire? He has enough adherents amongst the nobility without me.

FYODOR. Ivan Petrovitch! It grieves me to see that you and my brother-in-law have become so estranged. Our Lord God Himself commands us to love each other. Is such not God's command, Most Reverend Father?

DIONISY. Indeed, Your Majesty!

FYODOR. You see, Prince? What did the blessed Apostle say to the Corinthians? "I pray . . ." How does it go, Father Varlaam?

VARLAAM. "I beseech you that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

FYODOR. You see? And what did Apostle Peter say to the people? "Do not be unforgiving —" What else did he say Father Ioff?

IOFF. "Finally be ye all like minded, loving as brethren; not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling!" And your brother-in-law, Almighty Tsar, indeed lives up to the Apostle's words.

FYODOR. Yes, Father Ioff, yes! Rest assured, Ivan Petrovitch, that he respects you. We all admire your stanchness. Well, then, if only you were willing — if only you and Boris — [*In a whisper to Godunoff*] Go on, brother-in-law!

GODUNOFF. Prince Ivan Petrovitch! I have brooded long over our ancient feud. If you are willing to forget the past, then so will I, and I would gladly be a brother to you and your clan. And so I offer you my hand in peace!

IVAN [*drawing back*] Sir! Our enmity is too bitter and too real that it may be thus lightly dismissed!

GODUNOFF. What else then do you demand, Prince?

IVAN. Most noble Godunoff. I accuse you of disregarding Tsar Ivan Vassilitch"s wishes and testament, who on his death bed recommended that Russia be adminis-

tered by five nobles. I was one; Zakarin-Yourieff another; Mstislavsky was the third; Bielsky the fourth, and yourself the fifth. And who is governing Russia to-day, pray tell!

GODUNOFF. Tsar Fyodor Ivanovitch! I am only the executor of his imperial will.

IVAN. Do not evade the issue, sir! You have usurped the imperial power by craftiness! As soon as Tsar Ivan passed away you banished Bielsky, while you forced Mstislavsky to become a monk; as for Nikita Romanovitch Yourieff, illness followed by death rid you of him. Only you and I remained. But you avoided me, and taking advantage of your position, you began suggesting to the Tsar whatever command you wished to be issued, and you interfered boldly with the rights of nobles and merchants, and even with those of the Church. Dissatisfaction became rife . . .

GODUNOFF. Prince, permit me to say a word. . . .

IVAN. Dissatisfaction became rife. But the Tsar's name was your shield. He, however, saw through you. The inhabitants of Moscow appealed to us, and we Shouiskys pledged ourselves to defend truth, and with us are all the people. This is the root of our mutual hatred. I have spoken the whole truth. Let the Tsar settle this matter between us.

GODUNOFF. Prince Ivan Petrovitch! The Almighty Tsar wishes to make peace between us, but your words breathe enmity. Prince! I shall not reply to your accusations by counter-accusations, but I shall simply attempt to clear myself. You accuse me, Prince, of having usurped the power? But remember! Were you willing to coöperate with me? Were you not always the one to reject my advances? And, being absolutely unable to brook contradictions, was it not you who broke away? Then the Almighty Tsar, noticing your indifference, en-

trusted the entire nation to my care. I, on the other hand, accepted the trust solely for the sake of Russia. The war with Latvia is ended, and we did not cede one foot of Russian ground. In order to subdue the Tartar horde we gave the chieftainship to the old chief's nephew, and the former chief, frightened, surrendered. We quelled the Tcheremeesian uprising. We concluded a truce with the Swedes. With the German Emperor and with Denmark we strengthened our peace, while we signed with England a commercial treaty which may not altogether please our Moscow friends, but is of palpable benefit to our nation as a whole. Yet at the very time when Russia began to rise from the ashes of strife and poverty, you, Prince — and I do not mean to hurt your feelings — you, together with your brothers, inflamed the Moscow mob against me and secretly instructed intriguers to complain about me to the Tsar!

ANDREI SHOUISKY [*stepping forward*] It is not for personal reasons that we took strong measures, sir. It was only when you began usurping the imperial prerogatives that we and the people rose to the defense.

DIMITRY SHOUISKY. Such things did not occur even in the days of Tsar Ivan, sir.

IVAN IVANOVITCH SHOUISKY. The late Tsar was very severe with his courtiers. Those close to him feared him; those far from him lived fearlessly their own lives. You, however, seem to have enmeshed all Russia in a net, and there is no peace for any one, anywhere, from you!

GODUNOFF. When after long chaos Russia's house once more was being put in order, the healing of old wounds brought pain. Naturally! To strengthen a tottering building, there are walls which must be torn down. But, by the grace of God, we have passed the inevitable period of suffering, and every one has acknowledged the wisdom of the Tsar. You Shouiskys alone remain hostile

and wish to throw back our new and better national existence into the old channels of strife.

IVAN. Are we the only ones? Reverend Father Dionisy! Tell him whether we stand alone in grieving for the state of Christ's Church!

DIONISY. Prince, before your arrival we were speaking with the imperial chancellor. He will repeal all the decrees which we objected to so strongly.

IVAN. I have my doubts.

GODUNOFF. As to the rest, Prince, I am confident that we shall agree. The time of strife ended to-day. We have smoothed out whatever obstacles there were between us in this land, and now you and I together can better serve it than I could by myself.

DIONISY. Your words are wise and peaceful. We advise an end to this hate which is against the teachings of Our Savior and harmful to the welfare of the nation.

FYODOR. Reverend Father, I am convinced that the Shouiskys will give in! Am I not right, Prince, am I not right? Even the Tsarina, I know, agrees with me. Why are you so silent, Irinushka?

IRINA [*continuing to embroider*] Really, I cannot believe that Prince Shouisky can allow himself to be coaxed so long into doing what the Tsar can command with one word. [*Looks at Shouisky*] Tell me, Prince, if you stood now before Tsar Ivan instead of before Tsar Fyodor, would you hesitate so long? Can it be that you are forgetting your duty to the Tsar because he is so lenient and patient and kindly?

IVAN. Tsarina, I spoke to the Tsar as I would have spoken to his father, and I would rather mount the scaffold than be untrue to my principles. I am certain, however, that I would never have had occasion to use such words before Tsar Ivan, since the late Tsar would

never have permitted the imperial power to slip from his hands.

IRINA. Prince Ivan Petrovitch, when you were in Pskoff, surrounded by Lithuanians, and by your great bravery set an encouraging example to all Russia — I vowed then that, if you were saved, I would embroider in gold this cover for the sepulcher of Prince Vsevoloda's sacred remains in Pskoff. I have been embroidering for a long time, and my work is almost finished. Is it possible that I who began this in honor of the one who saved Russia, shall see him an enemy of the state, now that it is finished? [*Rises and crosses to Shouisky*] Is it possible that he for whose welfare I and all Russia prayed so fervently, will bring strife into this land by his stubbornness? I beg you — do not darken needlessly the glory of your fame with such a shadow! Obey the counsels of Holy Church and the Tsar's wishes! — Prince — [*Bows deeply to him*] See — I bend my knee before you — forget your enmity!

IVAN [*deeply moved*] Tsarina! Your words flow over my soul like a gentle brook! The unexpected kindliness of your speech stirred my heart to its depths! How can I refuse your appeal! Believe me, I am glad to comply with the Tsar's wishes. But, before doing so, permit me to say two words to your brother. [*To Godunoff*] It is not the first time, sir, that you evade your enemies through tricks and clever speeches. What guarantee can you give us that this is not a trap to lull our suspicions, so that later on you may destroy us the more easily?

GODUNOFF. Prince, mine own word and the Tsar's pledge will be your guarantee.

FYODOR. Yes, yes, Prince, I give you my pledge.

IVAN PETROVITCH. What fate awaits those who stood by us in defense of our faith?

GODUNOFF. Not one hair of their heads shall be

touched, nor will a hand be raised against them in violence.

IVAN. And will you seal this promise by kissing the Holy Cross before the Tsar?

GODUNOFF. I will!

IVAN [*addressing the nobles who came with him*] What do you say?

NOBLES. We agree to whatever you propose!

IVAN [*to Godunoff*] Here is my hand!

FYODOR. My friends! Thanks, thanks! Irinushka, this is the happiest day of my life! Reverend Father Dionisy, bring the Cross — quick, quick!

[*Dionisy picks the Cross up from table and offers it first to Shouisky, then to Godunoff.*]

IVAN. I swear that from to-day on I shall not injure Boris Fyodorovitch Godunoff by deed or word; in witness of which, I, for myself as well as for my brothers, my clansmen, adherents, traders and merchants, kiss the Cross of Christ, Our Savior! [*Kisses the Cross.*]

GODUNOFF. I kiss the Cross in witness of the fact that from now on I shall live in peace and amity with the Shouiskys and that I shall hereafter in all matters pertaining to the State seek their advice; and as to their followers, princes, nobles, and merchants, I shall not take toll for whatever wrong they may have done me in the past. [*Kisses the Cross.*]

FYODOR. That's it! Thus should one live up to the lessons of the Holy Scriptures! Embrace each other! That's it! Well — has that not lessened the tension? Isn't it so? [*Loud voices outside*] What are the shouts about?

IVAN. Your Majesty, they probably wish to know the outcome of the meeting between the chancellor and myself. With your permission, I shall go and join them.

FYODOR. No, no, remain here. Let them come in. Let them rejoice that harmony has been restored! [*To Kleshnin*] Go, Petrovitch, and bring them in!

KLESHNIN. All of them? There's a whole troop of counter-jumpers!

FYODOR. Why all of them? Let them delegate a few of their number and send them in! [*Kleshnin leaves*] To be frank, brother-in-law, I am not over-anxious to see them. They will surround me with their complaints and petitions, and I can't stand the noise — the zumming and droning — it always fills my ears like the clanging of cymbals. I cannot bear it! One stands and stares and does not know what to say. Still — to-day it is different! To-day I shall be glad to see them!

GODUNOFF. I am afraid, Your Majesty, that you will not be able to get rid of their importunate complaints. They are a troublesome lot. You had better permit me to speak to them.

KLESHNIN [*returning*] Your Majesty! Here are the delegates of all the merchants, grain-dealers, saddle-makers, weavers, and butchers whom Prince Shouisky brought along. Here they are!

THE DELEGATES [*enter and kneel*] Your Imperial Majesty! God bless you for bidding us come into your august presence!

FYODOR. Rise, men! I am glad to see you. I sent for you to tell you — why don't you rise? I am beginning to grow angry! [*The Delegates rise with the exception of one old man*] Why don't you get up, my friend?

THE OLD MAN. I would like to, Your Majesty, but I cannot! I can still manage to get down on my knees, but when it comes to getting up I have not enough strength. I am growing hopelessly stiff, Your Majesty!

FYODOR [*to the others*] Help him up, men! [*Two mer-*

chants assist the old man to his feet] That's it! You have not strained yourself, grandfather? Who are you?

THE OLD MAN. I am Bogdan Semyonovitch Kuriukoff, a visitor from Moscow.

FYODOR. How old are you?

KURIUKOFF. I am getting on towards a hundred years! In the days of your mother, Alona Vassilievna, I was an employee of the mint, making kopeck pieces on which was embossed the likeness of the Imperial Prince. You see, already in those olden days I was an employee of the state! Yes, I am well over a hundred!

FYODOR. Why, grandfather, you are shaky! Gentlemen, you ought to bring him a chair!

KURIUKOFF. Your Majesty, how dare I sit down in your presence?

FYODOR. But you are so very old. I take it you have seen a great deal in your life.

KURIUKOFF. Why, Little Father, how could I help seeing things? To be sure — I have seen a bit of everything. I well remember the time when Vassily Ivanovitch put his wife, Solomona Yourievna, into a convent because she was sterile, and took your mother, Alona Vassilievna, to wife. Then, you see, the people divided into two factions, one siding with your mother, the other with Solomona Yourievna. In those days there were terrible quarrels between the nobles; at the time of your father's minority the Prince of Oftchin fought bitterly with the Shouiskys, involving in their feud all of Moscow. Our clan always sided with the Shouiskys. It has been a tradition with us. All of a sudden you would hear the alarm sounding — and then, off to arms! Rally around the Shouiskys! The stores would quickly put up their shutters; quickly would we pick up whatever weapon came first to hand, hatchet or pole-ax, and rush to the marketplace where the fight already would be in full swing, one

side yelling: "Death to the Oftchins!", the other side: "Death to the Shouiskys!" And on with the fight!

FYODOR. It was a great sin, grandfather!

KURIUKOFF. Then, as soon as your father became of age and assumed the reins of authority, everything quieted down.

KLESHNIN. Well — he evidently never spoke in jest!

KURIUKOFF. God forbid! He was a very strict Tsar. He ruled the nobles with an iron fist! There was no trifling with him! Before you had time to think, the gallows would rise in the marketplace. Ah — there was punishment and suffering to spare! All of a sudden —

FYODOR. Grandfather, I asked you and your friends in to tell you —

KURIUKOFF. The tambourines would suddenly jingle, calling the people to the marketplace —

FYODOR. I asked you all in —

KURIUKOFF. In spite of everything you'd go —

A YOUNG MERCHANT [*pulling him by the coat*] Bogan Semyonovitch! The Tsar is speaking!

KURIUKOFF. Just a moment, nephew! Let me finish. We would come to the marketplace, and there —

FYODOR [*to the young merchant*] So you are his nephew?

THE YOUNG MERCHANT. Your Majesty, I am his grand-nephew —

KURIUKOFF. The executioners would already be waiting —

THE YOUNG MERCHANT [*again pulling his coat*] Bogdan Semyonovitch! What is the matter with you?

FYODOR [*to the young merchant*] Your face is familiar to me.

KURIUKOFF. With beheading axes —

FYODOR [*to the young merchant*] Where have I seen you?

THE YOUNG MERCHANT. At Mikoll's, Almighty Tsar, we drank your health. There was a bear fight. I overpowered the bear, and Your Majesty was kind enough to treat me to a tumbler of wine.

KURIUKOFF. With beheading axes they waited —

FYODOR. What is the trouble, grandfather? What are you talking about? What is there to remember? With axes—with axes! You do not give me a chance to say one word! [*To the young merchant*] So you are the fellow who vanquished the bear? I remember, I remember now. Irinushka! This is the young merchant of whom I spoke to you, you know? I believe your name is Sinielnikoff, isn't it?

THE YOUNG MERCHANT. Krassilnikoff, Your Majesty, Ivan Artyomoff Krassilnikoff.

FYODOR. Yes, yes, yes! Krassilnikoff. Just imagine, Irinushka! The bear came close to him, as close as you are to me now, Reverend Father; and he stepped forward this way, whirled his ax, and with one blow drove it into the bear's stomach! The bear struggles and screams "Ooh! Oooh!" And he kept on pawing him, Reverend Father, until his strength gave out and he tumbled over.

GODUNOFF. Your Majesty, you wish to announce our reconciliation to these people.

FYODOR [*to Krassilnikoff*] Didn't you also have a brother who beat Shakhovskoy in a fist fight?

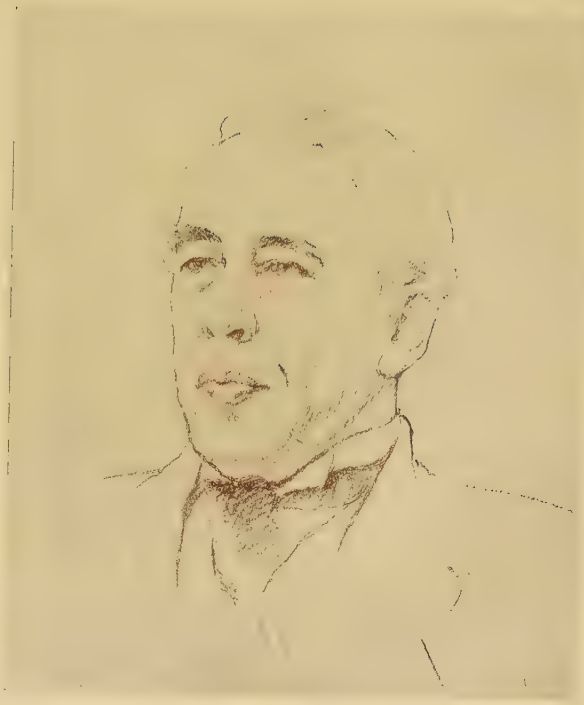
KRASSILNIKOFF. He is my cousin, Your Majesty. His name is Nikita Golub. [*Turning to his people*] Nikita! Come here and present yourself to the Tsar!

[*Golub Junior steps forward and bows*].

FYODOR. Good day, Golub! How are you? How are your muscles, my boy? [*To Shakhovskoy*] Did you recognize him, Prince?

SHAKHOVSKOY. Would I fail to recognize such a

VLADIMIR IVANOVITCH NYEMIROVITCH-DANTCHENKO, PRESIDENT OF THE DIRECTION, MOSCOW ART THEATRE



CONSTANTIN SERGEIEVITCH STANISLAVSKY, FIRST ARTIST AND PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL, MOSCOW ART THEATRE

FROM PENCIL SKETCHES BY A. A. KOIRANSKY

friend? Why, Golub, you gave one of my ribs a neat little fracture. And thanks to your gentle treatment I was in bed three weeks.

GOLUB JUNIOR [*bowing*] I respectfully greet you, Prince Grigory! God willing, we shall meet by the river next Easter, and then perhaps it will be your turn to beat me.

SHAKHOVSKOY. I shall always be glad to take you on for a bout — mark my word!

GOLUB JUNIOR. What will you stake on the outcome, Prince?

SHAKHOVSKOY. An embossed punch ladle! And you?

GOLUB JUNIOR. A sable cap!

IRINA [*to Fyodor*] Darling, do not allow them to fight. The time is not propitious. It may lead to evil consequences!

FYODOR. You think so, Irinushka! [*To Shakhovskoy and Golub Junior*] Mind you don't fight seriously. And be careful not to hit each other below the belt! It is the deadliest spot.

IVAN. Almighty Tsar, permit me to inform them why you bade them come.

FYODOR. Well, well, all right — tell them.

IVAN. Delegates! I wish to inform you that the noble Boris Fyodorovitch Godunoff and I, Prince Shouisky, together with my brothers, have made peace, and have faithfully promised each other to forget the ancient enmity between our clans and ourselves and to live from now on in perfect peace and harmony!

GOLUB SENIOR. Prince Ivan Petrovitch, how is that? We sided with you, and you deserted us?

IVAN. I did not desert you! The chancellor has promised not to make a single move in the future without me, and I, as you know, shall always defend your interests!

KRASSILNIKOFF. Prince, take care!

GOLUB JUNIOR. Prince, do not make peace!

GOLUB SENIOR. Prince Ivan Petrovitch, do not betray us!

IVAN. Do not be afraid, my people! The chancellor has given his solemn vow that he will not touch a hair on our heads!

A VOICE [*in the background*] He will give his vow — yes! But will he keep it?

KURIUKOFF. Permit an old man, Ivan Petrovitch, to give you one warning in his own homely way! When your forefathers at the time of Alona Vassilievna, the Tsar's mother, bade us rise in the Telepnia-Oftchin feud, we were stout allies; and in this lay the strength of your grandfather, Vassily Vassilitch! Had he concluded peace with the Oftchins he would have perished, and we with him!

GOLUB SENIOR. There was no need to inflame us against your enemies, if you intended making peace with them, Prince Ivan Petrovitch!

GOLUB JUNIOR. Prince Ivan Petrovitch! You are concluding peace at the price of our heads!

IVAN [*angrily*] Be quiet, young dog! Go on with your fist-fighting, and let older and wiser men attend to matters of state! How dare you doubt his word when he kissed the Cross? Do you hear? He kissed the Cross!

GODUNOFF [*in whisper to Kleshnin*] Take note of their names and write them down.

[*In the meantime the Delegates, who have been conversing among themselves, approach Fyodor in a body*].

DELEGATES. Almighty Tsar! Be merciful! Do not let us perish! Almighty Tsar, be merciful! Protect us! Be merciful, Your Majesty! Do not forsake us! We are lost now.

FYODOR. Why? What is the matter? What makes you say that? Against whom do you want me to protect you?

GOLUB SENIOR. Against your brother-in-law, Your Majesty! Against Godunoff!

GOLUB JUNIOR. Your brother-in-law will ruin us now completely!

FYODOR. What nonsense! Who told you? My brother-in-law loves you! Tell them, Boris, that you love them! He will tell you so at once! He will explain everything to you! I personally have not the time now! [*Attempts to leave; the Delegates surround him*].

DELEGATES. Almighty Tsar! Our only hope rests in you! We have done no harm! We were faithful allies of the Shouiskys, your own servants! Command Boris Fyodorovitch not to harm us! Order him!

FYODOR. Yes, all right! Now let me go! I have no time! Tell Boris everything, everything!

DELEGATES. Why, Your Majesty, how can we speak to Boris against his own self? Have mercy on us! Listen to us, Tsar! Permit us —

FYODOR [*putting his hands over his ears*] Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh! Tell Boris everything! Tell Boris! I have no time to listen! Tell Boris everything!

[*Fyodor leaves, his hands over his ears. The Delegates look at one another in complete consternation*].

CURTAIN

ACT THREE.

SCENE I.

Night. The garden of Ivan's house.

VASSILISA VOLOKHOVA [*coming out of the house*] What a dark night! Not a star to be seen! It is time for him to come! I wonder if that is not he standing there back of the fence. [*Walks to the gate and speaks in a whisper*] Prince! Prince! There is no one! Listen, isn't he coming? Those cursed nightingales with their noisy twitter make it impossible to hear if he is coming. I can't hear a thing! Something creaked! It's he, probably!

VOLOKHOVA [*turns around and speaks in a whisper*] Princess, — come — come!

PRINCESS [*in whisper*] Where are you, Vassilisa Pankratievna?

VOLOKHOVA. Here, darling.

PRINCESS. I cannot see you.

VOLOKHOVA. Here, come over here! Give me your hand! Why, little dove, how you tremble!

PRINCESS. It is chilly.

VOLOKHOVA. Why — no! It is quite warm. Smell the grass! And — oh — the scent of birch and ash-trees that drifts across the meadows from the monastery! What a glorious spring night! But your little hand is like ice!

PRINCESS. I had better go home!

VOLOKHOVA. Blessed Virgin! What are you afraid of? Is he a stranger to you? Why — thank God — I myself brought you together!

PRINCESS. Uncle's house is filled with guests. What if one of them should stroll through the garden?

VOLOKHOVA. What of it? Why should an engaged couple not be seen together? If after you are married you should want to become acquainted with some nice young lad, that would have to be done very circumspectly. By the way, that is not so very unusual either. For a handful of gold coins anything can be done.

PRINCESS. Stop, Vassilisa Pankratievna! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

VOLOKHOVA. Why should I be ashamed of myself, little dove? Everything depends on money. For money girls marry, and men. For money brother fights brother and son fights father. No one can withstand it.

PRINCESS. Pankratievna! One moment! Didn't you hear something?

VOLOKHOVA. It sounds like a wind-mill —

SHAKHOVSKOY [*behind the fence, in an undertone*] Ho!

VOLOKHOVA. Well — at last! [*Runs to the gate and opens it*] Come in, Prince! [*Shakhovskoy is seen behind the fence, then leaps across it into the garden*] Well — I declare! I opened the gate for you — why jump?

SHAKHOVSKOY. Bah — the gate! I am only sorry that the fence is so low. Why — I would leap the Kremlin walls to rush to the arms of my love. I am here at last!

[*About to put his arms around the Princess*].

VOLOKHOVA. That's right! Kiss her! Caress her, while I hold her hands.

SHAKHOVSKOY [*receding a few steps*] Do not be

afraid, Princess! I will not approach you until you permit me to do so.

VOLOKHOVA. Ah — my hawk-like Prince! I have kept my word! And you — what you promised me —

SHAKHOVSKOY [*throwing his purse to her*] Here you are!

VOLOKHOVA [*weighing the purse*] Heavens! How the coins clink! Too bad it is so dark!

SHAKHOVSKOY [*to Princess*] Why did you turn away from me? Do you not care for me?

PRINCESS. You kept me waiting.

SHAKHOVSKOY. Were you frightened?

PRINCESS. Terribly frightened! On such a night!

SHAKHOVSKOY. Afraid of storms?

PRINCESS. And what about goblins? Or what-not? And there he stands and laughs!

SHAKHOVSKOY. How can I help laughing? Goblins in a garden!

PRINCESS. Yes, it seems funny to you, but how about me? What if suddenly my uncle or brother should come out — what then? You would be lost!

SHAKHOVSKOY. How can I help myself since they do not let me be with you? Occasionally I have a glimpse of you, but never a chance for a word.

PRINCESS. Just listen to him! And what would you like to say to me?

SHAKHOVSKOY. That you are the most lovely in all the world! That without you life would mean nothing to me! That I can hardly wait until we are married!

PRINCESS. Well — and what if my brother had refused your proposal for my hand?

SHAKHOVSKOY. Then I would have taken you away!

PRINCESS. And what if I hadn't come with you?

SHAKHOVSKOY. I would have kidnapped you!

PRINCESS. And if I had escaped?

SHAKHOVSKOY. I would have caught you!

PRINCESS. And if I had jumped into the river at Moscow.

SHAKHOVSKOY. I would have jumped after you!

PRINCESS. And what if the water-sprite had defended me?

SHAKHOVSKOY. I would have caught him by his beard and his walrus mustache!

PRINCESS. Ha-ha. His walrus mustache! [*Both laugh.*]

SHAKHOVSKOY. Why — you're laughing! And your laughter — oh — is just like the twitter of the nightingales! My darling! When you laugh it seems as if the veil of night were lifted from this garden. Look yonder — a star has appeared — another — a third — still more! They all came to listen to you! They are shining in the pond! Take care — they'll tell the water-sprite how you laugh at him!

PRINCESS. Ha-ha!

SHAKHOVSKOY. There she goes!

[*A knock at the gate*].

PRINCESS. Oh — what is it?

VOLOKHOVA. Some one is knocking at the gate.

[*She and the Princess hide behind the trees.*]

SHAKHOVSKOY [*goes to gate*] Who is it?

VOICE [*outside*] Let me in — for God's sake!

SHAKHOVSKOY. Who is it?

VOICE. I! Krassilnikoff, a merchant! A terrible thing has happened! Let me in — quickly!

[*Shakhovskoy opens the gate — Krassilnikoff rushes in. His clothes are torn.*]

KRASSILNIKOFF. Where is Prince Shouisky? Where is Prince Ivan Petrovitch?

SHAKHOVSKOY. What do you want him for?

KRASSILNIKOFF. Prince — Prince Ivan Petrovitch!

[*Lights spring up in the windows of the house. Prince Ivan Petrovitch and his guests come down the steps into the garden. Shakhovskoy disappears behind the trees.*]

IVAN. What's all this noise? Who called me?

KRASSILNIKOFF. I did. Almighty Prince, have mercy! Befriend us! Archers came to our house, the Nogaieffs' and the Golubs' — they broke in — and arrested all those who were delegates at the Tsar's audience!

IVAN. Who arrested them?

KRASSILNIKOFF. Kleshnin — by order of Godunoff.

IVAN. What?

KRASSILNIKOFF. I myself just escaped!

IVAN. By order of Godunoff?

KRASSILNIKOFF. Yes.

IVAN. You actually mean to tell me that Godunoff had all the delegates arrested?

KRASSILNIKOFF. So Kleshnin told us — let this be a lesson to you about complaining of Godunoff to the Tsar!

GOLOVIN. What did I tell you, Prince? You see?

VASSILY SHOUISKY. You see, uncle? You did not wish to believe it? You would not take our advice and would not plead illness when the Tsar asked you to the audience!

IVAN. It cannot be — it cannot be!

KRASSILNIKOFF. Prince-Protector! People came to our houses to find out what happened.

IVAN. He shall pay for this dearly!

GOLOVIN. First the merchants, and then — you just watch — and it will be our turn!

ANDREI SHOUISKY. Conscienceless wretch!

MSTISLAVSKY. The brute!

IVAN. He swore on the Cross — the Holy Cross!

ANDREI SHOUISKY. No wonder he maneuvered this; he wished to separate us from our people!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. He wished to show all Moscow that people cannot rely upon us nor trust us, that we betray our allies!

IVAN. I suppose they are murmuring about us already!

KRASSILNIKOFF. Yes. Do not be angry, gentlemen, but as soon as the sleighs carried off our people, the neighbors gathered — and they did not speak kindly of you.

IVAN IVANOVITCH SHOUISKY. There are no two ways about it. We must arouse Moscow before we lose all our followers.

ANDREI SHOUISKY. We must send the alarm to all the suburbs.

IVAN IVANOVITCH SHOUISKY. Weapons must be distributed amongst the merchants!

ANDREI SHOUISKY. On — to Boris' house — and kill him!

GOLOVIN. We must send a messenger to Uglitch and tell the Nagis to proclaim Dimitry emperor at once! The Nagis and their Uglitch followers must start for Moscow immediately!

IVAN [*severely*] Be quiet!

VASSILY SHOUISKY [*to Golovin*] You are talking nonsense!

GOLOVIN. I have communicated with the Nagis. They are merely awaiting our signal.

IVAN. You dared write to them? You dared instigate the people of Uglitch against the Tsar? You should pay for this with your head!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Uncle! He shall answer for his own guilt. But this is not the time for us to quarrel.

GOLOVIN. Almighty Prince, I stand guilty before you. But my guilt has become useful. In spite of everything we shall have to call the Tsarievitch to mount the throne.

VASSILY SHOUISKY [*to Golovin*] You are courting misfortune, my friend.

DIMITRY SHOUISKY. Moscow must be aroused!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Oh — is that so — must Moscow be aroused — really? And what for, pray? Let us go to the Tsar as we decided yesterday, and demand that he divorce his wife.

DIMITRY SHOUISKY. It is too late. Yesterday His Holiness was our ally. To-day he has made peace with Boris. Yesterday the merchants trusted us. They no longer do to-day.

ANDREI SHOUISKY. Kill him!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Yes — what a chance! He has doubled his bodyguard by now! [*Takes out of his pocket written documents*] Here are the signatures of His Holiness and the other clerics. And here are the signatures of all the nobles and all the merchants. They have all committed themselves — and now they cannot recede, no matter how much they desire to.

DIMITRY SHOUISKY. Do you imagine you can threaten Boris by showing him this document?

VASSILY SHOUISKY. It would be quite useless to show it to him. He is like a bullet in a gun, no longer dangerous after it has been discharged! We can arouse all the people against Boris if such is our intent.

ANDREI SHOUISKY. It would be best to kill him!

IVAN. You all talk like madmen! Why should we separate the Tsar from the Tsarina? And why should we kill Boris? He betrayed himself by this double-dealing! He saved us the trouble of groping for shady means! And now — the Lord be praised! — we can destroy him with clean heart and hands!

DIMITRY SHOUISKY. What do you propose to do?

IVAN. We should go to the Tsar and convict the betrayer!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. It would be labor lost, uncle. The Tsar will believe whatever Godunoff says.

IVAN. The Tsar witnessed the oath! Every one witnessed it! Godunoff has no way to clear himself! [*To Krassilnikoff*] Go, tell the merchants that the Tsar has ordered the release of their delegates, and that Boris will be dismissed this very day! [*A bell chimes*] It is dawn! I shall go at once to the Tsar. I shall have to say but a few words. The lie is so evident. And when the sun rises in the East, Godunoff will be disgraced! [*Leaves. Krassilnikoff leaves, too. Silence.*]

DIMITRY SHOUISKY. Well, gentlemen?

IVAN IVANOVITCH SHOUISKY. I doubt much good will come of it.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Good? Well, hardly! He will return no wiser than he left. We are only losing time.

ANDREI SHOUISKY [*to Vassily*] Why did you not stop him, then?

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Whom? Uncle? You do not know him, evidently. Once he gets an idea into his head you cannot budge it. He reasons like a child. He says to himself that the very fact of his being right convicts the one who is wrong.

IVAN IVANOVITCH SHOUISKY. What can we do? Let us wait till he returns. Then let us go ahead with this appeal as we intended. If we could only find a suitable Tsarina, we could insert her name.

MSTISLAVSKY. Prince Ivan Petrovitch intended consulting His Holiness on the subject.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. He did not have time to do it. They called him to the Tsar in order to make peace. We must find a suitable Tsarina before he returns, so that he need not worry about it.

MSTISLAVSKY. She must appeal to the Tsar; and, too, be one of us. Of such there are few.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. I know of one.

MSTISLAVSKY. Who? Speak!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Why — your own sister!

MSTISLAVSKY. Natasha? What are you talking about? Have you forgotten? She is engaged to Shakhovskoy!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Engaged — not married! Listen, Prince — our enterprise is not a jest. Everything depends upon the Tsarina's kin. Are we certain that the new Tsarina's clan will be allied to us? Your sister, however, is one of us.

MSTISLAVSKY. True enough! No one is better suited than she. I myself thought of it already, and had we not given our word . . .

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Prince! Don't I know how you gave your word? Shakhovskoy, that empty-headed ruffian, is not to your liking! He took you and your uncle unawares; he put on his best manners, bowed very low, made a great show of his friendship for you, swept your uncle off his feet — and you never said a word!

ANDREI SHOUISKY. I also said — why the hurry? Thank God, Natasha can wait.

IVAN IVANOVITCH SHOUISKY. It was Prince Ivan who settled too quickly.

MSTISLAVSKY. Yes, he was in too much of a hurry. Natasha could have been Tsarina.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. And if she were Tsarina you would be the Tsar's brother-in-law, only rather more honorable than Godunoff.

MSTISLAVSKY. Yes — more honorable.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Then what is the difficulty?

MSTISLAVSKY. If only we had not given our word . . .

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Don't you let that worry you! Your word — really — as if you had not given us your

word that no matter what happens, you would snatch the power from Boris' hands and give it to us!

MSTISLAVSKY. How can I refuse him?

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Pick a quarrel with him!

MSTISLAVSKY. What will uncle say?

VASSILY SHOUISKY. He will return furious, because he will have failed with the Tsar, and he will be glad to make his niece Tsarina.

IVAN IVANOVITCH SHOUISKY. That is right. He would never break his promise of his own accord. But should you two quarrel there will be no time to find out who is right and who is wrong.

DIMITRY. And if Natasha is to be Tsarina we must hurry.

GOLOVIN [*to Vassily*] Pardon me, Prince Vassily Ivanovitch —— [*He takes the same document, and while the others are conversing, he takes out of his belt a pen and ink-well and writes something on the paper.*]

VASSILY SHOUISKY [*to Mstislavsky*] Make up your mind, Prince!

MSTISLAVSKY. If I could find a pretext for a quarrel!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Would you consent then?

MSTISLAVSKY. Surely!

SHAKHOVSKOY [*appears suddenly*] Prince! Why not ask me first whether I am willing to relinquish my fiancée to some one else?

ALL. Where does he come from? How dared he hide here?

[*The Princess screams*].

MSTISLAVSKY. That was my sister screaming! They were here together! [*He walks off into the garden, and comes back leading the Princess by the hand. Volokhova appears*] And here is the match-maker! Were you helping them?

VOLOKHOVA. Have mercy! What are you saying?

We just came down for a walk — and all of a sudden he jumped over the fence. Really! Really!

MSTISLAVSKY. So that is the way, little sister, in which you preserve our honor? Prince Grigory, this is a bad deed! I take back my promise!

SHAKHOVSKOY. You propose to give my fiancée in marriage to the Tsar, do you? Take care, Prince! It shall not be as long as I am alive!

VOLOKHOVA [*stepping on Shakhovskoy's foot*] And why should it not be? Just look how excited he is! Just because he is engaged! Tsar Fyodor Ivanovitch is a better match than you! Scoundrel! Brute! Blackguard! Thief!

SHAKHOVSKOY. Begone, witch, begone! Step aside, everybody! Princess! Come to me! She is mine, before God! — I shall marry you at once — the first one of you who . . . [*He takes out his dagger.*]

ALL. Sheathe your dagger!

VASSILY SHOUISKY [*to Mstislavsky*] What a fiancé Natasha has! He raises his hand against his own flesh and blood!

MSTISLAVSKY. Sister, come to me! You heard me, Prince. Go away! Our covenant is broken!

ALL. Prince, do not be a fool! Go! You heard him! A brother has jurisdiction over his sister.

SHAKHOVSKOY. That remains to be seen! Princess, tell me — do you really wish to be mine?

MSTISLAVSKY. Be silent, sister!

PRINCESS. Oh — God!

SHAKHOVSKOY. Princess! Will you submit to a forced marriage with the Tsar?

PRINCESS. No, no! I long to be yours! yours!

SHAKHOVSKOY. Then come with me!

MSTISLAVSKY [*to his sister*] Not a step.

SHAKHOVSKOY. Come with me!

PRINCESS. I am helpless! Don't you see?

GOLOVIN [*to Shakhovskoy*] Prince, give in. You gain nothing by obstinacy. Everything between you and them is at an end! Or do you perchance imagine that Ivan Petrovitch will forgive you for what you have done today? Everything is over. [*Shows him the document*] Look! Princess Mstislavskaya's name has been written here!

VASSILY SHOUISKY [*to himself*] Ah — What a clever rogue!

GOLOVIN. According to this document you yourself have agreed to be our ally! You cannot break your word now!

SHAKHOVSKOY [*tearing the paper out of Golovin's hands*] Give it to me!

GOLOVIN. Stop! What is the matter with you? Stop!

SHAKHOVSKOY. It is in my hands now!

ALL. Hold him!

SHAKHOVSKOY [*threatening them with his dagger*] Stand back! I shall kill the first man who steps forward! I am going straight to the Tsarina with this convicting evidence! [*Runs away with the document.*]

SCENE II.

Tsar Fyodor's study. Enter Godunoff accompanied by the Deacon who puts on the table a sheaf of papers and two imperial seals, one large, the other small. Through another door comes Kleshnin.

GODUNOFF [*to Kleshnin*] Have you attended to everything?

KLESHNIN. Everything, sir. We arrested them in

their homes before daybreak. If only they would send us the written evidence from Uglitch!

GODUNOFF. You will give it to me as soon as it arrives here. [*Kleshnin leaves; enter Irina*] Sister Tsarina, good morning! Has not the Tsar arisen yet?

IRINA. A short time ago the chaplain went to his bedroom with an ikon.

[*Enter Fyodor through another door, followed by the chaplain who carries an ikon.*]

FYODOR. Good morning, Irinushka! Good morning, brother-in-law! I actually overslept and missed the morning service. I had such an unpleasant dream. It seemed to me that again I made peace between you, Boris, and Ivan Shouisky. He seemed to offer you his hand, and you did likewise. But instead of shaking his hand you seized him by the throat, and began choking him — then there was chaos. Tartars attacked us all of a sudden, and some terrible bears came and clawed us. I was saved by the Reverend Father Iona. Well, Reverend Chaplain, is this dream a sinful one?

CHAPLAIN. No. It is not sinful. But just the same it is a dream of ill omen.

FYODOR. I also dreamed of brother Dimitry, and he was crying. And something dreadful happened to him, but what I cannot remember.

CHAPLAIN. Tsar, you must pray more fervently before you go to sleep!

FYODOR. Brr! What an unpleasant dream! [*Notices the papers on the table*] And what is this, pray? Are you going to bother me again, brother-in-law?

GODUNOFF. I shall not detain you very long, Your Majesty. I merely need your consent for a few things.

FYODOR. Can't you settle these matters without me? I do not feel quite well.

GODUNOFF. Two words only!

FYODOR. Father Chaplain, put to-day's ikon Saint on the shelf, and keep yesterday's until next year. Who is to-morrow's Saint?

CHAPLAIN. Saint John the Hermit.

FYODOR. I shall re-read his life in the Book of the Saints. If only Boris will let me off! Now give me your blessing, and I shall attend to business. [*The Chaplain gives him his blessing and leaves. Fyodor sits down. Godunoff presents the papers to him*] Well, brother-in-law, what have you there? Come, give it to me.

GODUNOFF [*takes a few sheets from the sheaf*] The Ukrainian chiefs are writing us that the chief of the Tartars is again driving his horde northward.

FYODOR. Why — that is my dream, word for word! All we need now is that you should start to choke Shouisky!

GODUNOFF [*spreading the papers out before him*] Here, Your Majesty, are the instructions to our captains.

FYODOR. Seal them!

[*Godunoff hands the papers to the Deacon who puts the imperial seal on them. Godunoff gives another paper to the Tsar.*]

GODUNOFF. And this, Your Majesty, is an appeal from the Tsar of Iver who begs you to take him under your protection.

FYODOR. The Tsar of Iver? Where is his country?

GODUNOFF. It is bordered by the kingdom of the Kizilbash tribesmen, and it is rich in cereals, silks, wine, and expensive horses of fine lineage.

FYODOR. And he appeals to me? You heard, Irinushka? You heard? What an extraordinary fellow! What has entered his head?

GODUNOFF. The Shah of Persia and the Turkish Sultan are worrying him.

FYODOR. Poor Fellow! Is he a Christian?

GODUNOFF. Yes.

FYODOR. Well, then, let us immediately declare him our subject! And, do you know, brother-in-law, we ought to see about a gift for him. Irinushka, what could we send him?

GODUNOFF. Before we do anything else, I would suggest that we proclaim this document throughout Moscow.

FYODOR. Very well — go ahead and seal it. [*Deacon seals it*] And what is this?

GODUNOFF. These are instructions to Prince Troiekuroff for his course with the Polish Diet when they elect their King. You know, Your Majesty, that through your generosity and since the death of Batur, a great many Polish nobles have become your friends and stand ready to make you their King.

FYODOR. I? No, no, brother-in-law! What can I do with Poland's crown? I have enough worries of my own. What next? And what has got into all these people? Here is that Tsar of Iver making me a present of his land, and there are the Polish barons trying to force their Kingdom on me! Well and good — the Tsar of Iver at least is a Tsar. But the Poles are Catholics, foes of Russia!

GODUNOFF. That is just why you should not reject their offer, Your Majesty. Thus can you make faithful subjects from former enemies.

FYODOR. Do you think so? All right. Seal it. Now then — is this all?

GODUNOFF. Here are the appeals of two noblemen who during your father's reign ran away to Lithuania. They are asking your permission to return.

FYODOR. Who is preventing them? They are welcome. Do I understand that a great number of them ran away? My opinion, brother-in-law, is as follows:

We should make Russia so pleasant that people would not prefer living abroad. Then there will be no reason for their running away from us. Do you know what? You ought to write to all of our subjects who are in Lithuania that I will give money and land to all who wish to return.

GODUNOFF. I was thinking of it, Your Majesty, and have already prepared a document to that effect.

FYODOR. Very well. Seal that, too! Is that all?

GODUNOFF. That is all, Your Majesty.

[*The Deacon takes the seals, gathers all the documents, and leaves.*]

FYODOR. Well, brother-in-law, I will not detain you any longer. And I wish that you, Irinushka, would open the book of the Saints and read to me the life of Saint John the Hermit.

IRINA. Permit me, Fyodor, to show you first an appeal. I have received a letter from Uglitch from the widowed Tsarina Maria Fyodorovna. With tears she implores you to permit her to return to Moscow with her son, Dimitry.

FYODOR. Why — Irinushka! You know yourself that I have been asking Boris this very thing for a long time. I would be glad . . .

IRINA. Just as you pardoned those refugee nobles in Lithuania, so I thought that you might permit your step-brother and your step-mother to return.

FYODOR. Irinushka, my dear, it would make me happy to have them come back. [*pointing to Godunoff*] Tell it to him!

IRINA. I know, Fyodor, that you wisely entrusted my brother with the management of the Kingdom. None knows more about statecraft than he. But this is not an affair of statecraft. This is your private family matter. And you alone should be the judge.

FYODOR. Boris, you heard what she said? It is the truth. You actually do not allow me to take a single independent step. What are things coming to? I wish to have Dimitry return. You know when I take this tone, I never reconsider my word.

GODUNOFF [*to Irina*] Sister, you interfered unwisely in a matter which you do not understand. [*To Fyodor*] The Tsarievitch cannot be brought back.

FYODOR. What? What? Have I not told you that I want him back?

GODUNOFF. Permit me, Your Majesty . . .

FYODOR. No. This is too much! I am not a child! It is . . . [*Begins to pace up and down the room.*]

STEWARD [*opening the door*] Prince Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky!

GODUNOFF [*to steward*] His Majesty cannot receive him to-day.

FYODOR. Who told you so? Let him come in! [*Continues to pace up and down*] I am not even allowed to be master in my own house! [*Enter Ivan*] Good morning, Prince! Thank you for coming. You are just the man I want to see — I want to talk to you about my brother, Dimitry.

IVAN. Your Majesty, I, too, have wished to speak to you for a long time about the Tsarievitch Dimitry. But first I must tell you about your brother-in-law.

FYODOR. What? About Boris?

IVAN. Yes.

FYODOR. What has he done?

IVAN. He has broken his oath.

FYODOR. What are you saying, Prince?

IVAN. Your Majesty, you heard how he swore not to lay a finger on my adherents?

FYODOR. Of course I did. Well — ?

IVAN. This very evening he had the merchants whom

you received in audience arrested and sent nobody knows where.

FYODOR. One moment, one moment! There is something wrong here.

IVAN. Ask him!

FYODOR. Is it true, brother-in-law?

GODUNOFF. Yes.

IRINA. Why — brother?

FYODOR. Are you not afraid of God, brother-in-law, that you could do such a thing?

GODUNOFF. I found that it was inadvisable to leave them in Moscow.

FYODOR. And what about your oath?

GODUNOFF. I swore not to punish them for past deeds, and I did not! They were to-day arrested because after we made peace, they tried again to stir up strife between the Shouiskys and myself, and you yourself witnessed it, Your Majesty!

FYODOR. That is not true. But even so you should not . . .

GODUNOFF. I am surprised that Prince Ivan Petrovitch is siding with those who attempted so shamelessly to disrupt our new-found peace.

IVAN. And I am surprised, sir, that you dare try to justify yourself by such a sinful lie! Your Majesty! Was there not mocking laughter in his heart, laughter at you and me, yesterday when he kissed the Blessed Cross that was in His Holiness' hands?

FYODOR. No, brother-in-law, no! You did not act right! We did not thus interpret your words!

IVAN. Your Majesty, what will all Russia think of you when they hear that he trampled under foot his oath which you sanctified?

FYODOR. This shall not happen! The merchants shall be released at once.

IVAN. Is that all, Your Majesty? And he who deceived you and who made me appear dishonest before the whole nation, will he continue to manage the affairs of the country as previously?

FYODOR. One moment, Prince. . . . There was no deception here. . . . You merely misunderstood each other. . . . And, besides, you have already agreed that you and he will share in the discussion of matters of state.

IVAN. He gave oath to that effect. With this understanding I gave him my hand. But you see yourself how he has kept his oath! Almighty Tsar, beware of him! Do not entrust him with the rule of the land nor with affairs of your own family! You wished to speak to me about your brother. Do you know whom he sent to Uglitch with your brother? Do you know who he is? He is a traitor! And a thief! He is a perjurer who was saved from the gallows by Godunoff. Do not let the successor to the throne remain in such hands!

FYODOR. No, no, Prince, rest assured regarding this matter. I have already told Boris that I want Dimitry here with me.

GODUNOFF. And I replied to His Majesty that he must remain in Uglitch.

FYODOR. What? You are arguing again?

GODUNOFF. Your Majesty, permit me to tell you. . . .

FYODOR. No, I shall not permit you! Am I Tsar or am I not?

GODUNOFF. Permit me to explain to you. . . . Please listen! . . .

FYODOR. I do not wish to listen. Am I Tsar or am I not? Am I Tsar or am I not?

GODUNOFF. You are the Tsar. . . .

FYODOR. Enough! That is all! You heard, Irina? You heard, Prince? He has admitted that I am Tsar! He can argue no longer. Hereafter he will remain silent! [*To Godunoff*] Do you know what a Tsar is? Do you know? Do you remember my father, the late Tsar? You, you . . . do not worry, Prince. I shall have Dimitry come here from Uglitch. Also my stepmother and her brothers — I shall send for them all! What does this mean, anyhow? What is it? He is making me feverish! Just look, Irina! [*Walks about the room, and stops in front of Shouisky and Godunoff*] Now, then, since I made peace between you, compose your anger! Come, Prince. Come, brother-in-law! That is enough! Kiss each other! Come!

IVAN. Almighty Tsar! I cannot understand you! You saw, you heard from his own lips that he is playing with his oath! You yourself countermanded his last deed. You agreed that your brother must not remain in the hands of his companion! On the other hand, you leave the kingdom in his hands? Almighty Tsar — either one of two things! Either I am a cheat and then you must punish me for deceiving you — or you must dismiss Godunoff for treason!

FYODOR. Why — I have already made him apologize to you for his wrongs. What more do you desire? Nothing pleases him! Did you hear, Irina?

IRINA. Prince Ivan Petrovitch, it seems to me . . .

GODUNOFF. Let him alone, sister! I myself shall rid the Tsar of the difficulty of deciding between him and me. Almighty Tsar! As long as you trusted me, I was useful to you. Now that you trust me no longer, I am worthless to you. Prince Shouisky told the truth: one of us must give up his privileges. You yourself made the choice, Your Majesty, when you listened to his

accusations with such kindly patience, while you cut me short. Permit me to resign.

FYODOR. What is the matter? What is the matter?

GODUNOFF. To whom, Your Majesty, do you command me to transfer my office?

FYODOR. Why — you misunderstood me! Heavens! See what you have done, Prince!

GODUNOFF. No, Your Majesty, I understand your wishes. You wish to recall the very people whom I sent away in order to keep peace in the city. You wish to bring to Moscow the Nagis and the Tsarievitch, although there are grave reasons why they should remain in Uglitch. Since such is your decision, Almighty Tsar, it must be carried out. But I refuse the responsibility!

FYODOR. I did not know, Boris, that there were such important reasons. Since you . . .

IVAN. With your permission, Almighty Tsar! [*Turns to leave.*]

FYODOR. Prince! Prince! Where are you going?

IVAN. I am going away because I do not wish to see my Tsar bring disgrace upon himself.

FYODOR. Well, Prince! We will settle everything. . . .

IVAN. Fyodor Ivanitch, Emperor of All the Russias! I feel ashamed of you — forgive me! [*Leaves.*]

FYODOR. Prince! Prince! Oh, God — he is gone! And this one proposes to leave me! Brother-in-law! You . . . you were jesting! What is going to happen to my country?

GODUNOFF. Almighty Tsar, how can I serve you if you tie my hands?

FYODOR. No, brother-in-law, no! Well — then? Do you consent? Yes, brother-in-law, yes?

GODUNOFF. Given this provision, Almighty Tsar, I

agree. But remember that only thus can I continue to serve you.

FYODOR. Thank you, brother-in-law, thank you! Do you know — now we should pacify Shouisky! Why, he misunderstood you. I, too, misunderstood you yesterday.

[*Enter Kleshnin, hands Godunoff some papers and leaves. Godunoff looks them over and gives them to Fyodor.*]

GODUNOFF. Your Majesty, first read this report from Uglitch, and a secret letter written to the Nagis by Mikhailo Golovin, an ally of the Shouiskys. Bitiagovsky sent it here by messenger.

FYODOR [*reading the paper*] Well, what of it? "In a drunken condition abusive language is often heard. . . ." Well — is there any one who does not use abusive language when he is drunk? "Money is being extorted through threats —" Perhaps you did not assign them enough, brother-in-law. You know, they are more accustomed to live under my father's rule. You should give them more. Well — what else? "And they boast that with the help of the Shouiskys — a Tsar . . ." Why, it is impossible!

GODUNOFF. Read over Golovin's letter!

FYODOR [*reads, mumbling to himself, stops and shakes his head*] Drive me from the throne? God! Why can't they wait a little? Every one knows that I cannot live forever — to wit, the fact that I have a pain in my side! If only they could give Dimitry a chance to grow up! How gladly I would relinquish the throne to him! On the other hand, if they now depose me by force and suddenly put a minor on the throne, there would have to be a regent, chaos, confusion, ruin throughout the empire — that will not do!

GODUNOFF. Now you see, Your Majesty, why the Nagis cannot be permitted to return to Moscow.

FYODOR. This will not do!

GODUNOFF. You are thinking about it too impersonally, while great danger threatens the nation. There is no time to lose. We must settle this matter in a drastic way.

FYODOR. What matter, brother-in-law?

GODUNOFF. Your Majesty, from Golovin's letter you can see that the Shouiskys have opened negotiations with the Nagis. You must order immediately that the Shouiskys be closely watched.

FYODOR. Watched? What? Ivan Petrovitch watched? And then what?

GODUNOFF. And then, if he cannot clear himself, he must be . . .

FYODOR. What must he be?

GODUNOFF. Executed!

FYODOR. What? Prince Ivan Petrovitch? The one who was here a short while ago? The one with whom I shook hands just now?

GODUNOFF. Yes, Your Majesty.

FYODOR. The one between whom and you I made peace yesterday?

GODUNOFF. That very man!

FYODOR. He? Executed with his brothers?

GODUNOFF. With all those who are implicated in this treason!

FYODOR. And what about the Nagis?

GODUNOFF. Without the Shouiskys, Your Majesty, they are harmless.

FYODOR. Brother-in-law, do you propose executing those who saved our nation?

GODUNOFF. The ones who are threatening your throne!

FYODOR. And all this because the Nagis threatened me when they were drunk? Because somebody took into

his head to write to them, probably without the knowledge even of the Shouiskys? Brother-in-law, tell me, are you willing to continue serving me only on condition that I make you a present of their heads?

GODUNOFF. Only on this condition, Your Majesty, can I answer to you for the welfare of the nation. Since you refuse to trust me, once and for all, permit me to resign and take the responsibility of government upon your own shoulders.

FYODOR [*after a long struggle*] Yes, brother-in-law, yes! In this matter, I, myself, shall accept the responsibility! You see, I know that I am not able to take the reins of government into my own hands. What manner of a Tsar am I? It is not difficult to deceive me and cheat me in all affairs. In one thing only I will not be deceived: when I must decide whether a thing is black or white — no, I will not be deceived then! This, brother-in-law, does not require wisdom but merely fairness! Go in peace. I shall not detain you. I rely on God's help. I do not believe in the treason of the Shouiskys; and, even if I did believe it, I would not send them to their death. Enough Russian blood was shed in my father's time — God forgive him!

GODUNOFF. But, Your Majesty . . .

FYODOR. I know what you are going to say — that, because of this, the kingdom will be thrown into confusion? Is that not so? Let God's will be done! I did not want the throne. Apparently it was God's will that a Tsar devoid of wisdom should sit on Russia's throne. Such as I am I must remain. Mine is not the right to speculate cunningly on what the future may bring.

GODUNOFF. But, Your Majesty, think . . .

FYODOR. What is there to think? What is there to think, brother-in-law? The matter is settled. I do

not need your advice. You are free. Please leave me now! I need to be alone, brother-in-law.

GODUNOFF. I am going, Your Majesty. [*He crosses slowly in the direction of the door, but before opening it, turns around and looks at Fyodor. Fyodor allows him to leave and embraces Irina.*]

FYODOR. Irinushka! My love! Perhaps you are angry with me because I did not call him back?

IRINA. No, Fyodor, no! You did right! Just follow the voice of your guardian angel, and you will not err!

FYODOR. Yes, Irinushka, I think so, too. What can I do? I was not born a Tsar!

IRINA. Why, you are trembling, and your heart is beating so fast?

FYODOR. My side aches slightly. Irinushka, I will not go to church. It is not an unpardonable sin, is it, to miss just one service? I would rather go to my bedroom. I shall lie down and rest for about an hour. Give me your arm to lean on. That is right! Come, Irinushka! I place my trust in God. He will not abandon us! [*Leaves, leaning on Irinushka's arm.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT FOUR.

SCENE I.

The house of Prince Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky. Ivan and Princess Mstislavskaya. Left, a table with tumblers, behind which stands Starkoff.

IVAN. Do not cry, Natasha. You see, I am not angry. I forgave you. The old woman led you into mischief, and God punished us.

PRINCESS. Uncle, what will happen to him?

IVAN. To Grigory? Why, he will probably run away into the mountains, if he intends to betray us. Twice I sent for him to consult with me, but he could not be found. What a hot-headed fellow! Had he waited for my return, all this would not have happened!

PRINCESS. Would you have forgiven him, uncle? You would not have forced me to marry the Tsar?

IVAN. I would be sorry to see you the wife of such a man! I would have chided you both. But I would not have broken my word. That meddlesome brother of yours!

PRINCESS. He will not go to the Tsarina! He will not betray us!

IVAN. I myself do not believe that he will betray us. But, whether he does or not, we shall not wait. Before I returned from my audience with the Tsar, everything was already settled!

PRINCESS. Do not torture me — tell me, in God's name, what you have decided!

IVAN. It is not a girl's concern, Natasha — you will learn later on.

PRINCESS. Uncle, you look so downcast — and so solemn — only with me are you as kindly and tender as you used to be. But I am afraid to look into your eyes. I am trying to read in them the thoughts that worry you.

IVAN. Our clansmen will be here very soon. I have some matters to talk over with them. Go to your room, Natasha.

PRINCESS. Let me remain with you! Allow me to receive your guests!

IVAN. It cannot be done, Natasha.

PRINCESS [*to herself*] Dear Saints! There is a terrible foreboding in my heart!

[*Leaves. Enter the Brothers of Ivan, the Merchants Golub and Krassilnikoff, with the other followers of the Shouiskys. They all stop before Ivan in an attitude of respectful silence. Ivan looks at them for a few seconds in silence.*]

IVAN [*sitting down*] You are all aware of the turn affairs have taken. We can be arrested any moment. Do you all wish to perish, or follow me?

ALL. Prince-Protector, command whatever you wish. We shall follow.

IVAN. Then listen to me! Prince Dimitry! Go immediately to Shoui! Call together all the nobles and clerics and merchants, to the place of execution, and announce to them that Tsar Fyodor has lost his mind and can no longer rule, and that we have chosen the next-in-blood, Dimitry Ivanovitch, to be our Tsar. We shall give him our fealty. Prince Andrei! I am sending you to Riazan. Gather the troops and lead them on to Moscow! Prince Fyodor! Go to Nizhni. Prince Ivan! You go to Suzdal! Baron Golovin! I have chosen

you to go to Uglitch. There, with the Nagis, you will proclaim Dimitry Tsar, and when the bells peal, you will start for Moscow with flying banners. I, with Mstislavsky and Prince Vassily, will remain here to keep close watch over Godunoff. [*To his aide-de-camp*] Fediuk! Bring the glasses! I drink to everybody's health and success! Long live Tsar Dimitry Ivanovitch!

ALL [*with the exception of Vassily Shouisky*] Long live Tsar Dimitry Ivanovitch!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Dear uncle — do not be angry with me for saying so — but did you not decide rather hurriedly? Just remember! Only this morning you refused to come to this same conclusion!

IVAN. I was a fool. To whom did I go to make complaint of Godunoff. To the Tsar? There is no Tsar in Russia!

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Think it over, Prince!

IVAN. I have considered everything — Golub! I stand guilty before you. You are right. That Tartar fooled me like a little boy. He knew the Tsar better! How did you manage to escape?

GOLUB. On the way, Prince, I frayed the ropes that bound my hands, and, when we crossed the Krassnoye, I knocked down two archers, jumped from the wagon into the water, and swam away.

IVAN. You came back in time. This very day you and Krassilnikoff and the other young men will arouse the merchants!

KRASSILNIKOFF. You may depend upon us, Almighty Prince! One and all we will rise against Boris!

IVAN. Be ready as soon as the sun goes down. Enter the Kremlin when the great Tsar-Pushka booms from the walls! [*To his aide-de-camp.*] Fediuk, fill the loving-cup! To everybody's health! [*He drinks and passes the cup.*]

MERCHANTS. Prince-Protector! You are our father! We shall stand by you to the very end! May the Lord God help you in destroying Boris! And long live Tsar Dimitry!

IVAN. Amen! [*The Merchants leave. Ivan addresses Mstislavsky*] Prince, you must select at once five hundred trustworthy citizens. Let them go and pay homage to Tsar Dimitry, and, as soon as it grows dark, lead them to the Kremlin. In the meantime I and Prince Vassily will go to Boris' house and seize him.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Oh — Uncle! You know that I am not a coward, nor am I afraid of dangerous enterprises — but still, think it over!

IVAN. If we consider too much, we shall accomplish nothing. There is no need for further deliberation. Our course of action is clear!

SCENE II.

The home of Godunoff.

Godunoff walks up and down excitedly. Kleshnin leans against the tile-stove.

GODUNOFF. I have been dismissed! Fyodor himself seems intent upon putting an end to my activities. I will not permit that to happen! The Nagis have been waiting a long time for my downfall. They will become still more aggressive when they hear of it. They will now stop at nothing. Dimitry is the flag around which they will gather, together with the Tsar's and my own foes. It is to be expected. Riots and chaos will spread from Uglitch like a conflagration. Bitiagovsky — I cannot rely on him — will betray me unless I have him watched. I am compelled . . . I cannot do

Elizabeth, Moscow

VASSILY IVANOVITCH KATCHALOFF

Saharoff, Moscow

OLGA LEONARDOVNA KNIPPER, WIDOW OF THE PLAYWRIGHT, TCHEHOFF

Saharoff, Moscow

IVAN MIHAILOVITCH MOSKVIN

LEADING PLAYERS OF THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE COMPANY

otherwise . . . they are forcing my hand . . . [*To Kleshnin*] Do you know this woman well?

KLESHNIN. She is useful in many ways! Fortune-teller, healer, match-maker, procuress, a good Christian, and on rather friendly terms with the devil — in a word: an extraordinary old woman! She is here already. Shall I call her in?

GODUNOFF. Never mind! Tell her to watch the Tsarievitch, and let her listen to what the Nagis say. What was the Tsar doing when you left him?

KLESHNIN. He was bending over a pile of papers which you had given orders to have brought to him. He scratched his head — poor fellow — he could not make head or tail of them!

GODUNOFF. He will not be able to manage without me. [*Musingly*] I remember again what was foretold me on the day of Tsar Ivan's death. It is now coming true. The one who caused my downfall, my foe, he is in Uglitch! [*Loudly, pulling himself together*] Tell her to watch the Tsarievitch carefully!

KLESHNIN. Do you not want to see her, Little Father?

GODUNOFF. Never mind! [*To himself*] "Weak, yet powerful . . . innocent, yet guilty . . . himself, yet not himself . . . and then — killed!" [*To Kleshnin*] Tell her to watch the Tsarievitch carefully! [*Leaves.*]

KLESHNIN [*alone*] To watch him! Hm! Don't I know what is really your heart's desire! Why not? I shall take this sin upon my conscience! I am neither fastidious nor lazy. As long as he is alive the Shouiskys and the Nagis will give us no peace. See, how his wings were clipped! I did not expect this outbreak from Fyodor Ivanovitch! Naturally, he will not be able to manage . . . and if in the meantime something should happen . . . ? [*Opens door*] Come in, woman!

VOLOKHOVA [*enters, in her hand a holy wafer*] Protect us, Blessed Virgin! I greet you, sir. I brought you a holy wafer from the Church of the Three Saints to bless you!

KLESHNIN [*in a kindly manner*] Sit down here, please, little dove! Did they tell you why I sent for you?

VOLOKHOVA [*sitting down*] They told me, sir, they told me: the noble Godunoff wishes to send away the Tsarievitch's nurse, and have me take her place. You may rest assured! I shall watch over him as if he were the apple of my eye. Sleeping and waking, eating and drinking, I shall watch over him!

KLESHNIN. Have you ever before been a nurse?

VOLOKHOVA. I do not wish to lie, sir. I was never a nurse. But I love children very much. A child is like one of God's angels! I nursed my own son and kept him under my wing until he became twenty years of age, until the year of the plague. Only during that year was I afraid to keep him with me.

KLESHNIN. Why so, little dove?

VOLOKHOVA. At such a time misfortunes can happen easily. Suddenly the epidemic may attack one, and before you know it one is dead and buried and forgotten by all. You can take no chances at such a time.

KLESHNIN. Are you a professional match-maker now, little dove?

VOLOKHOVA. Yes, noble, sir, I am a match-maker. It is sinful to praise one's self. And yet, there are few weddings celebrated in Moscow without my help.

KLESHNIN. What was the last wedding you arranged?

VOLOKHOVA. Prince Shakhovskoy and Princess Mstislavskaya, sir.

KLESHNIN. Is she not the one whom you wanted

to offer to the Tsar yesterday, in spite of the fact that the Tsarina is still alive?

VOLOKHOVA. God forbid! Who is the scoundrel who told you so? The dog, the thief, the slanderer! May his tongue swell! May he grow blind!

KLESHNIN [*severely*] Silence, old woman! Silence! We know everything! The late Tsar, Ivan Vassilitch, whose memory we reverence, would have ordered you, witch, to be burned at the stake over a slow fire! But the noble Boris Fyodorovitch Godunoff is magnanimous. Instead of punishing you he will reward you, if you will know how to fulfill your duty by the Tsarievitch.

VOLOKHOVA. I know how, Little Father! I know how, sir! You may depend on me! I shall not allow a hair on his head to be harmed! I shall take care of him well and faithfully!

KLESHNIN. But if through no fault of yours something should happen to him. . . .

VOLOKHOVA. Why, sir, what can happen to him as long as I am here?

KLESHNIN [*meaningly*] He will not hold you responsible for it! [*Volokhova looks at him in astonishment*] Listen, old woman! No one has power over life or death — and he is an epileptic!

VOLOKHOVA. What do you mean, Little Father? What is it? I cannot get it through my head!

KLESHNIN. You will, presently!

VOLOKHOVA. Yes, yes, yes, yes! Quite so, sir, quite so! God's will must be done! If I am not held responsible, anything and everything may happen, of course! We must all bow to God's will, sir!

KLESHNIN. You may go, witch! I shall see you before I go. But remember — money, lots of it — or jail!

VOLOKHOVA. Why, sir! Why prison? Be generous,

and everything is settled. Just permit me to take my son along!

KLESHNIN. You may do so. Go now!

VOLOKHOVA. I beg your pardon, sir. You shall be pleased with us. Of course! Of course! These are uncertain times, where anything may happen! God only is strong and all-powerful, the Lord only! And our affair is settled! [*Leaves.*]

SERVANT [*announcing*] Fediuk Starkoff!

KLESHNIN. Show him in!

[*Enter Starkoff.*]

SCENE III.

The Tsarina's apartment.

Fyodor sitting, busy with a pile of papers, wipes the perspiration from his face. In front of him are the two imperial seals, one big and the other small. Irina goes to him and puts her hand over his shoulder.

IRINA. You should rest a little, Fyodor.

FYODOR. I cannot understand a thing! Boris selected these matters for me to attend to on purpose! The only intelligible paper that I have come across is a letter from our messenger in Vienna. The Emperor is sending me six monkeys as a present. Irinushka, I will send them on to Dimitry.

IRINA. You will not have them sent here?

FYODOR. You see, Irinushka, if Boris were willing to remain . . .

IRINA. Have you not yet decided who is to replace him?

FYODOR. Why, you yourself said that it is better to wait. You thought that he will offer to make peace. But instead he sent me this pile of papers. I simply

exhausted myself, trying to understand them, and now there is another misfortune: I sent for Prince Ivan Shouisky to help me with these matters, and he replied that he is ill and unable to come. He is probably stubborn. I sent for him again, saying that there is a matter of importance of which I wish to tell him. [*Kleshnin enters*] Ah, is that you, Petrovitch? Where do you come from?

KLESHNIN. From a sick man's bedside.

FYODOR. From where?

KLESHNIN. From the bedside of your sick servant, Godunoff.

FYODOR. Is he sick?

KLESHNIN. How can he help being sick when, in reward for all his devotion, you chased him away like a dog? I am glad that you are well!

FYODOR. Why, I . . .

KLESHNIN. What is the use of talking? Little Father, from your early childhood you were harsh and austere, and of unfeeling heart. When you make up your mind to do a thing, you carry it out though heaven and earth crash together!

FYODOR. I know myself, Petrovitch, that I am austere.

KLESHNIN. In this respect you are just like your father.

FYODOR. I know it. But is it possible that Boris will refuse to return if I acknowledge that I was at fault?

KLESHNIN. He does not demand that much. Just command me to seal this order concerning a careful watch to be kept on the Shouiskys — and he will again serve you.

FYODOR. What? Does he still suspect them?

KLESHNIN. Your Majesty! It is not a matter of suspicion but of plain fact! Starkoff, Prince Ivan's aide-

de-camp, has just informed us that to-day Prince Ivan has decided to proclaim your little brother Tsar, while he intends to drive you from the throne before sunrise. Why, Little Father, you can ask Starkoff yourself!

FYODOR. Oh — all these rumors! This is the first time I hear Starkoff's name while Shouisky's name is known everywhere like the pealing of a bell. Do you expect me to believe this Starkoff in preference to Shouisky?

KLESHNIN. Believe or not, I am telling you this: if you do not order them all at once to . . .

STEWARD [*announcing*] Prince Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky!

KLESHNIN. What? He here?

FYODOR [*joyfully*] He came! He came, Irinushka!

KLESHNIN. Give orders to have them carefully watched!

FYODOR. Shame on you, Petrovitch! [*To the steward*] Ask him to come in. [*To Kleshnin*] I shall ask him in your presence. [*Enter Ivan*] Good day, Prince Ivan! Just imagine, an accusation has been made — [*Ivan becomes embarrassed*] But I do not believe it. I want you to tell me now that you are innocent of any plotting against me, as you have always been loyal in the sight of all the world. Your word will satisfy me.

IVAN. Your Majesty . . .

FYODOR. Understand me, Prince. I do not doubt you. I merely want . . .

KLESHNIN. No, Little Father, allow me! If this is what you intend to do, then let me ask him. Prince-Protector! Can you swear by the blessed ikon over yonder that you did not intend to betray your Tsar?

IVAN. I do not recognize your right to question me.

FYODOR. Prince, it is not he — it is I who am asking you!

KLESHNIN. I shall take down the ikon at once!

FYODOR. There is no need of ikons! Tell me on your word of honor. Well, Prince?

IVAN. Spare me!

IRINA [*who has been watching Ivan steadily*] My Lord, why offend with such a question one whose virtues are a household word? Do not ask him. Just exact his solemn oath that he will remain in the future as true and faithful as he has been in the past.

FYODOR. No, Irina, I want to shame this man. Tell me on your word of honor, Prince! Were you plotting against me? Why don't you speak?

KLESHNIN. On your word of honor! Do you hear, Prince? [*To himself*] It would have been more binding had he sworn on the ikon.

IRINA [*to Fyodor*] Dear husband —

FYODOR. Well, Prince?

IVAN. Spare me!

FYODOR. No. I shall not!

KLESHNIN. Are you perhaps afraid, Prince?

FYODOR. Afraid — nonsense! He is stubborn and hard, but I am more hard and stubborn than he. Tit for tat! I shall not let him go until he answers.

IVAN. Very well, then. I shall tell the whole truth!

FYODOR [*frightened*] What? What do you mean to . . . ?

IVAN. Yes! You heard the truth. I have plotted against you!

FYODOR. The Saints preserve us!

IVAN. Your weakness has exhausted our patience. You have given over the empire into strange hands. For a long time you have ceased to be Tsar. I have decided to tear Russia from Godunoff's grip!

FYODOR [*in an undertone*] Quiet! Quiet! [*Pointing*

to Kleshnin] Not in his presence! Do not speak in his presence! He will repeat everything to Boris.

KLESHNIN. Continue, Prince!

FYODOR. Be quiet, be quiet! Tell me later when we are alone!

KLESHNIN. His Majesty is awaiting your confession!

IVAN. Yes! To-day I acknowledged your brother as Tsar!

FYODOR. Petrovitch — do not believe him! Do not believe him, Irina!

IVAN. Because of whatever merits I may have acquired in the past, I shall demand one boon from you! I alone am guilty! Do not kill my allies. Without me they are not dangerous to you!

FYODOR. What are you raving about? What nonsense! You do not realize yourself what fantastic things you are telling me!

IVAN. Do not dream of pardoning me, Your Majesty. For, if you did, I would again plot against you. You are not able to rule. But I cannot remain under Godunoff's heel.

KLESHNIN [*to himself*] The honor of a Prince! Bah! He needs no urging to confess his guilt!

FYODOR [*takes Ivan aside*] Prince, listen! Just have a little patience. Give Dimitry a chance to grow up. And I will then abdicate of my own free will. I swear it by my Savior!

KLESHNIN [*crosses to table and takes one of the seals*] Shall I seal this order?

FYODOR. What order? You did not understand what I said! I myself ordered Dimitry proclaimed Tsar! I gave this order — I am Tsar! But I have changed my mind. It is no longer necessary. I have changed my mind, Prince!

KLESHNIN. Have you lost your mind?

FYODOR [*whispering to Ivan*] Go away! At once! I shall take all the blame! Away with you!

IVAN [*upset*] No, he is a saint! God does not want me to rebel — God does not want it! Your simplicity of heart is God-like, Fyodor Ivanovitch! I cannot rebel against you!

FYODOR. Go away! Go away! Undo what you have done! [*Pushes him from the room.*]

KLESHNIN [*passing the seal across the document, ready to use it*] Little Father! Have the order sealed! Do not allow him to gather an army! Tsarina! Tell him that the nation's welfare depends on this very order!

IRINA. It is no longer needed! The storm has passed. Shouisky is no longer our enemy.

FYODOR. Did you hear, Petrovitch, did you hear? Irinushka, you are an angel! Nothing escapes you. You observe and understand everything. Yes — Shouisky is no longer our enemy!

[*Noise behind the door. Chambermaid runs in, frightened.*]

CHAMBERMAID. Tsarina! Hide! Some madman has broken into the house!

SHAKHOVSKOY [*heard outside*] Stand back! Stand back! Let me go! I must see the Tsarina! [*Shakhovskoy appears on threshold, held back, by several servants. He pushes them aside and throws himself at Irina's feet*] Forgive me, forgive me, Tsarina! I tried vainly to see you since this morning.

FYODOR. Why — it is Shakhovskoy!

SERVANTS [*rushing in accompanied by Archers*] Seize the thief!

FYODOR. Silence, silence, men! There is no thief here! [*To Shakhovskoy*] Tell me! What do you *want?*

SHAKHOVSKOY. Tsar! Punish me. But hear me first! They want to divorce you and the Tsarina!

FYODOR. You are dreaming, Prince!

KLESHNIN [*to himself*] So that is how the land lies! [*To Fyodor*] Tsar, listen to him!

SHAKHOVSKOY. They want to make my fiancée your wife!

FYODOR. Who? They? Who are they?

SHAKHOVSKOY. The uncles of my fiancée, Princess Mstislavskaya. The Shouiskys!

FYODOR. Why, Prince, you are mad beyond all hope!

SHAKHOVSKOY [*rises and hands the Tsar a paper*] Here is their appeal! Little Mother! Make them give back my fiancée! Almighty Tsar — order them to have our wedding celebrated this very day — at once!

KLESHNIN. We have heard rumors about this document. Let me have a look at it. [*Takes the paper and, after glancing it over, turns to Fyodor*] You see, Little Father? A moment ago you said that the Tsarina knows Prince Ivan. But it seems that she does not. She is goodness and kindliness itself. Just now she was Ivan's angel of mercy. And she is the one whom he wants to take out of your life as if she were a sinful, guilty, erring wife, in order that you may marry his niece! You do not believe it, Little Father? Just read this! [*Hands the paper to Fyodor.*]

FYODOR [*reads*] "Almighty Tsar, contract another marriage. Take Princess Mstislavskaya for your wife. As for Tsarina Irina, let her enter a convent . . ."

KLESHNIN. You know Ivan Petrovitch's handwriting? Read the signature!

FYODOR [*reads*] "We all greet you respectfully, and have hereto affixed our signatures: Dionisy, Metropolitan of all the Russias; Archbishop Varlaam of Krutits; Prince . . ." What? [*With trembling voice*] "Prince — Ivan — Petrovitch Shouisky!" His handwriting! He, too, signed! Irinushka, he signed! [*Sinks into armchair and covers his face with his hands.*]

IRINA. Fyodor!

FYODOR. He! He! Any one else but he! To separate you and me! [*Cries.*]

IRINA. Control yourself, Fyodor!

FYODOR. To banish you!

IRINA. Dear husband! I cannot understand what it means. But just think! If Prince Ivan meant to drive you from the throne, could he have planned to make Princess Mstislavskaya your wife?

FYODOR. You — my Irina — to send you into a convent —

IRINA. But it is not going to happen!

FYODOR [*jumping up*] It shall not be! No! I will not permit anything to happen to you! Let them come. Let them come with cannon. Just let them try!

IRINA. Dear husband, you are exciting yourself without cause. Who can separate us? Why — you are Tsar!

FYODOR. Yes — I am Tsar! They forgot that I am Tsar! Petrovitch, where is that order? [*Runs to the table and seals the order*] Here — here — give it to Boris!

[*Kleshnin leaves.*]

IRINA. What have you done?

FYODOR. Let them be arrested and put into prison!

IRINA. My Lord! My Tsar! Do not be so hasty!

FYODOR. Prison — the prison for them!

SHAKHOVSKOY [*pulling himself together*] Almighty Tsar, have mercy! I did not ask for this! I appealed to you only concerning my fiancée —

FYODOR. Boris will settle everything for everybody!

SHAKHOVSKOY. He will ruin them! He will murder the Shouiskys!

FYODOR. He will settle everything!

SHAKHOVSKOY. I shall be guilty of their death! Tsar, have mercy!

FYODOR. The prison, to prison with them!

SHAKHOVSKOY. God! What have I done? [*Runs out.*]

IRINA. Dear husband, listen! Call back Kleshnin! Do not be too hasty! Do not send the Shouiskys to prison now that they are accused of treason!

FYODOR. No, no, no, Irinushka! Do not even ask me! You do not understand this. If I wait, I will pardon them perhaps. I will pardon them, and they need a lesson. Let them go to prison! Let them get a taste of what it means to separate you and me! Let them stay in prison for a while! [*He leaves.*]

SCENE IV.

The banks of the Yaousa River. Across the river is a bridge. On the farther bank is a bastion, cut by gates. On one side meadows, windmills, a monastery. People belonging to various classes of society are strolling across the bridge. Kuriukoff approaches, a battle-ax in his hands, followed by Lute-Player.

KURIUKOFF. Stand here, fellow. Tune your lute, and as soon as people gather around, begin to sing a song about Prince Ivan Petrovitch. God help us! This is what I have lived to see.

[*The player tunes his lute.*]

KURIUKOFF [*examines his ax*] Well, old friend, old ax of my youth! Since the days of the late Vassily Ivanovitch, I never took you from the wall. You have become rusty. But to-day you will surely be of use to me once more! [*To Lute-Player*] Well — fellow? Get ready. People are beginning to come.

A VILLAGER [*approaches Kuriukoff*] Good day, father Bogdan Semyonovitch! What kind of an ax have you there?

KURIUKOFF. It is my grandson's ax, little brother, my grandson's. It appears that once more the Tartars

are threatening us. You see — my grandson was too busy, and I undertook to have the ax ground. And here I stopped a moment to listen to this lad's melodies.

VILLAGER. Are the Tartars very close?

KURIUKOFF. Rather close, I hear.

SECOND VILLAGER. Whom will they send against them?

THIRD VILLAGER. Perhaps again Prince Ivan Petrovitch!

KURIUKOFF. They will send Godunoff.

FIRST VILLAGER. Gracious! What are you saying, Bogdan Semyonovitch?

KURIUKOFF [*vindictively*] Why not? Is not Godunoff a warrior?

THIRD VILLAGER. How can he compare to Ivan Petrovitch?

KURIUKOFF [*to Lute-Player*] Well, fellow, how about that song? How about it?

LUTE-PLAYER [*singing*]

"A king was going to war,
To march against the town of Pskoff;
Having come close to the town, he began boasting:
'This very town with all its towers,
I shall take, and Prince Shouisky, the warrior,
I shall bind hand and foot, and sweep throughout All the Russias!'"

A MAN. Sweep throughout all the Russias! Ho! He does not *want* much!

SECOND MAN. To bind Ivan Petrovitch hand and foot! Just try it!

KURIUKOFF [*to Lute-Player*] Well, my lad?

LUTE-PLAYER [*continues*]

"A terrible storm is raging over Pskoff,
Loud ring the sabers against the walls,
And fiery bullets drop on the town like hail!"

A Woman. Mother of God, what horrors!
Lute-Player [*continues*]

"But when the moon rises, the Almighty Prince Ivan Petrovitch
Appears on the battlements, walking straight ahead without stopping,
Facing the bullets fearlessly!"

Second Man. Yes! He was always fearless!
Lute-Player [*continues*]

"We have taken a solemn oath:
We shall not give up Pskoff, but fight to the last drop!"

First Man. And they did not surrender Pskoff! No!
Second Man. The Holy Saints defended it!
A Woman. The Mother of God protected it!
Kuriukoff. And who was sitting there, Christians? Who was it?
A Man. One word! Ivan Petrovitch!
Kuriukoff. Just so!
Lute-Player [*continues*]

"For five months the king beleaguered Pskoff.
When the sixth month came, he grew discouraged.
And then the Prince made a sortie, and beat
The entire Lithuanian forces. The king himself barely escaped.
While running away, he, that dog, cursed:
'Do not let me remain in Russia, Almighty God, nor my children,
Nor my great-grandchildren!' "

Second Man. Served him right! Let them find out what Prince Ivan is like!
Lute-Player [*finishing his song*]

"Glory be to the sun shining in the heavens!
Glory be on earth to Prince Ivan Petrovitch!
Glory to all Christian folks!"

A Man. Glory, glory indeed! You have consoled us, gentle Lute-Player!

Second Man. You have honored the one who should be honored! [*Giving money to the Lute-Player*] Take this, my lad!

All. Here is a present for you! Here! Here is money! [*They all drop money into the Lute-Player's hat.*]

A Man. Brothers, look! Who is that galloping along?

Second Man. Look how he whips his horse! He must be a messenger!

Messenger [*on horseback*] Let me pass! Let me pass! Make way! Clear the bridge!

First Villager. Friend, where are you from? What news?

Messenger. From Tieshloff! The Tartars have crossed the Oka and are on their way to Moscow! Let me pass! [*They all stand aside. The Messenger gallops across the bridge into the city.*]

First Man. Heavens! They will soon be here!

A Woman [*screaming*] Merciful God! Again they will burn our villages!

Third Villager. There she goes and bawls! As though we had never seen the Tartars before! What do we have Prince Ivan Petrovitch for?

Fourth Villager. Even the king, who is nothing except a more decent Tartar, ran away like a dog from Prince Ivan Petrovitch!

Third Villager. The man who can vanquish Ivan Petrovitch has not yet been created!

Kuriukoff [*stepping to the front*] Such a man has indeed been created, Christians! Indeed! The accursed one! He has vanquished Ivan Petrovitch! He has

bound him—him—our savior—he bound him hand and foot!

THE PEOPLE. Why—God protect you, Little Father — What are you saying? Who dared put hand on Prince Ivan Petrovitch?

KURIUKOFF. Godunoff, Christians, Godunoff, Godunoff wants to do away with him! Soon he, our father, will be led across this very bridge to prison! [*Noise and loud cries amongst the crowd*] Remember, people, who has always taken our part? Who defended us against our enemies? Against magistrates and soldiers! Against inspectors and jailers! Who stopped the king from conquering Moscow? Who turned back the Tartar hordes again and again? The Shouiskys have always stood by us, Christians! Is there any one in all the world who can compare with the Shouiskys? And whom did the Princes and nobles beg for support against Godunoff? People, without the Shouiskys we are lost!

VOICES IN THE CROWD. We shall let no harm come to the Shouiskys! No! No harm shall come to our father, Ivan Petrovitch!

KURIUKOFF. Let us rescue him from Godunoff, Christians, and carry him home on our shoulders!

THE PEOPLE. To the rescue!

KURIUKOFF. Let us stand by the Shouiskys, as we did in the days of Alona Vassilievna! Here he comes, Christians! Here he comes, our father, Ivan Petrovitch! Here he comes, he and his brothers, in chains!

[*Through the gates of the bastion tambourine-players on horseback ride; behind them rides Prince Tureynin; behind the latter, archers are leading Ivan and the other Shouiskys, with the exception of Vassily, in chains.*]

TUREYNIN [*to the people*] Clear the bridge! You are blocking the way!

KURIUKOFF. Little Father, Prince Ivan Petrovitch!

I told you — do not make peace! I told you, dear, do not make peace with Godunoff!

THE PEOPLE. Your cause is just, Ivan Petrovitch, and we are with you!

TUREYNIN. Make way, scoundrels! We are taking the Shouiskys to prison, by the Tsar's command!

THE PEOPLE. By the Tsar's command? That is a lie! By Godunoff's command!

TUREYNIN [*to the Archers*] Disperse the crowd!

KURIUKOFF. Shoulder to shoulder, Christians! Long live the Shouiskys!

THE PEOPLE. Long live the Shouiskys! We shall rescue our father!

KURIUKOFF. Well, then, follow me all! As in the days of Alona Vassilievna! The Shouiskys! The Shouiskys! [*He attacks the Archers with his ax, the crowd following him.*]

THE PEOPLE. The Shouiskys! The Shouiskys!

TUREYNIN [*to Archers*] Kill the bandits! Throw them in the water! [*General tumult.*]

KURIUKOFF [*falling from the bridge*] The Shouiskys! I give my soul into God's hands!

IVAN. Be quiet, my friends, my people! Listen to me!

THE PEOPLE. Dear father! We shall let no harm come to you!

IVAN. Listen to me, my people! Stand back! It is the Tsar's command! Do not put your heads into the noose!

TUREYNIN. Go ahead!

IVAN. Wait, Prince, let me say one last word to my people. Forgive me, people of Moscow, and remember me with kindness. We were with you to the very end, but God did not grant us success. New laws are being put into effect. Bow to God's will, observe the Tsar's commands, do not rise against Godunoff! There is no one left to lead you, nor to protect you against him! I am merely reaping what I sowed. I have sinned, not because

I quarreled with Godunoff, but because by foul means I tried to separate the Tsar from the Tsarina. And then I committed a still greater crime, when I rose against the Tsar himself. He is the Holy Tsar, my people, appointed by God, and his Tsarina is also Holy. May God grant them a long and happy life! [*To Tureynin*] Now, Prince, let us go on. Forgive me, people of Moscow!

THE PEOPLE. Little Father! To whom are you abandoning us poor orphans?

TUREYNIN. Beat the tambourines!

[*The tambourine-players beat their tambourines. The crowd falls back. The Shouiskys are being led across the stage. Through the city gates rushes in Shakhovskoy, hatless, a sword in one hand, a pistol in the other, behind him Krassilnikoff and Golub, armed with spears.*]

SHAKHOVSKOY [*out of breath*] Where is Prince Ivan Petrovitch?

A MAN. What do you *want* him for? To rescue him, no doubt! You are a bit late, Prince!

SECOND MAN [*pointing back stage*] This very minute the prison gates closed behind him.

SHAKHOVSKOY. Then come with me, people! We shall tear the prison walls stone from stone!

KRASSILNIKOFF. Why are you hesitating, people? Don't you know us?

GOLUB. This is Prince Shakhovskoy. And us you know!

VOICES IN THE CROWD. Well then, brothers? Really! We are enough in numbers! We can rescue him! Why should we not accompany the Prince?

SHAKHOVSKOY. To the prison, brothers! The Shouiskys are still alive!

THE PEOPLE. The Shouiskys! The Shouiskys! [*All run, following Shakhovskoy.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT FIVE.

SCENE I.

A small drawing room in the Tsar's Palace. Godunoff and Kleshnin.

GODUNOFF. Have all the adherents of the Shouiskys been arrested?

KLESHNIN. All the princes of the houses of Bekassoff, Ouroussoff, Tatieff, and Kolitcheff are already behind the prison bars. The only one whom we could not put our hands on is Golovin. He simply seems to have vanished into thin air. As for Mstislavsky, you gave orders not to touch him.

SERVANT [*addressing Godunoff*] Vassilly Ivanovitch Shouisky is here, brought by imperial command.

GODUNOFF. Show him in. [*To Kleshnin*] Leave us alone. [*Kleshnin and the servant leave. Vassily Shouisky enters*] Good morning, Prince. I have learned that you tried to keep your uncle from carrying out his dastardly conspiracy. I praise you for it.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. I took the solemn oath to be faithful to my Tsar. . . .

GODUNOFF [*continuing*] And to denounce the Tsar's foes. But you did not denounce Prince Ivan.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. I knew, sir, that you would find out everything through Starkoff.

GODUNOFF. And were you aware that this document is also known to me?

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Yes.

GODUNOFF [*showing him the document*] Do you confess to having signed it?

VASSILY SHOUISKY. I do. I confess, sir, furthermore that this petition was due to my initiative. Why deny it? I tried to be of service to you. When my uncle entered into an agreement with His Holiness and our Moscow adherents joined in, everybody offered his advice. There were even some people in Uglitch who wanted to proclaim Dimitry Tsar. In order to avoid this contingency, I suggested this appeal. Why did you not permit us to present it to the Tsar? You knew of its existence. The Tsar, forewarned by you, would have heard us and refused us, and everything would have finished peacefully.

GODUNOFF. Your words seem plausible enough. It does not matter whether I believe you or not. You are shrewd. You have already learned that it is not easy to fool me, and that it is difficult to argue with me. You are in my hands. However, I shall not punish you for past offenses, nor do I demand promises for the future. Whether it is more advantageous to you to be with me or against me, you must yourself decide. You may take your time about making up your mind.

VASSILY SHOUISKY. Boris Fyodorovitch, what is there to think about? I am your servant!

GODUNOFF. We understand each other. You will forgive me then if I now satisfy myself if you are sincere in your protestations. [*Vassily Shouisky leaves.*]

SERVANT [*announces*] Sir, the Tsarina is coming.

[*Irina enters, accompanied by several noblewomen. Godunoff kneels before her.*]

GODUNOFF. Almighty Tsarina, I did not expect this honor.

IRINA [*to the Noblewomen*] Leave us. [*The Noble-*

From Theatre Arts Magazine

A CORNER IN THE OLD KREMLIN PALACE, A SCENE FROM ACT V OF COUNT ALEXEI TOLSTOY'S "TSAR FYODOR IVANOVITCH"

women leave] Brother, it is not you but I who should kneel.

GODUNOFF [*rising*] Sister, why did you come here unannounced?

IRINA. Forgive me. Every minute counts. I came to beg you, brother —

GODUNOFF. What about?

IRINA. Is it possible that you will kill Prince Ivan?

GODUNOFF. He confessed his treason himself.

IRINA. He repented! We can trust his word. The Tsar's magnanimity conquered him. What are you afraid of? Would you really return to the terrible days of Tsar Ivan? Those days are past. Is not kindliness Fyodor's only strength? Is he not beloved by the people because of it? And Fyodor's strength is yours. You must keep it intact for your own sake. Through it, and through it alone, we achieved with the Shouiskys what Tsar Ivan himself could not achieve by threats of death!

GODUNOFF. Tsar Ivan was like a great volcano, and from the bowels of this volcano came an earthquake which shook all the world, and there would shoot up tongues of flame that carried death and destruction through all the land. Tsar Fyodor is quite different. I would rather compare him to a cleft in a green meadow. Its ruts and hillocks are overgrown with green, silken grass. But if you wander about carelessly, both the shepherd and his flock will fall through the cleft — into a precipice. We have a saying that once upon a time a church was swallowed by the earth, and so a hole appeared, and the people call it the ghost church. And there is a rumor that on very quiet days one can hear a distant tolling of bells and chanting of hymns. Fyodor seems to me like such a sainted but unreal church. In his soul he is always frank to friend and foe. His heart is filled with love and kindliness. And it is as though bells tolled gently in his

inmost self. But what is the use of all this kindliness and piety since the man has no strength? Seven years have passed since Tsar Ivan swept across Russia like the scourge of God; seven years since with great effort I put stone upon stone to erect a building, that sacred temple, that powerful empire, that new and prosperous Russia of ours, the Russia over which I spent many sleepless nights in thought! But everything is futile! I am building over a precipice! And, in a second, everything can crash into ruins. Should the most insignificant enemy desire it, he could win over the Tsar's heart, and my own will, with which I steeled his heart, he will forget. I have many foes, and they are not all negligible. You know the insolence of the Nagis and the Shouiskys' unconquerable pride — no, do not interrupt me — I respect the Shouiskys — but their loyalty is stupid and short-sighted. Their path is prosy and hackneyed; chained they are to the old ideals of loyalty; and with such a Tsar as Fyodor there must be no room for them!

IRINA. You are right, Boris. Prince Ivan has been in your way for a long time. But you are at last triumphant. His guilt, of which he is now ashamed, is a sure proof that in the future Fyodor will have no servant more devoted than he.

GODUNOFF. True! He will no longer rebel nor plot against the throne. But do you think that he has also given up the idea of thwarting me?

IRINA. You have broken him. You have conquered him completely. He is in prison. Is it possible that you seek still further vengeance?

GODUNOFF. I bear no grudge toward a living soul. I listen to neither friendship nor enmity. I see only my duty, clear before me. I do not destroy my personal enemies, but those of the cause.

IRINA. Consider the good the man has done!

GODUNOFF. He was rewarded by many honors!

IRINA. The Khan of the Nagis, followed by his horde, is driving to the walls of Moscow. Who will command our defense against him?

GODUNOFF. It will not be the first time that Moscow has seen the Khan.

IRINA. Shouisky alone can save Moscow.

GODUNOFF. Moscow is as blind to-day as ever. The one who, in the very heart of our country, rebels against the Tsar is much more dangerous than the Khan. Dangerous he is to the peace of the kingdom. He, too, is dangerous who strives ceaselessly to overgrow the crop of our young generation with the weeds of ancient strife. Irina! I am in the habit of honoring in you a fair mind, and a clear understanding of the affairs of state. Do not let useless pity overshadow your brain! I counted upon you, Irina! Hitherto you have been more against than for me. You thought that Fyodor would learn to be Tsar. Your feelings were hurt because he was guided by me. But you see his helplessness. From now on help me, instead of hindering me. Not without reason did God make you the weak Tsar's Tsarina. A grave responsibility is on your shoulders. You must be Tsarina, not a mere woman. You must now influence Fyodor to cease interfering in behalf of the Shouiskys.

IRINA. If I could persuade myself that they must perish for the good of the empire, then perhaps I would find enough courage to stifle the grief in my heart. But I do not believe, brother, I do not believe that this bloodshed will help the land. Nor do I believe that you yourself will grow stronger through such a deed. No! The blame will weigh heavily upon you. God forbid that I help you! No! I rely upon Fyodor!

GODUNOFF. You mean to oppose me again?

IRINA. Our paths are not the same.

GODUNOFF. A time will come when you will understand, Irina, that your path and mine run parallel. [*He opens the door and calls out*] The Tsarina summons her ladies-in-waiting!

[*The Noblewomen enter.*]

IRINA. Forgive me, brother!

GODUNOFF [*bowing very low*] Forgive me, Almighty Tsarina!

SCENE II.

A square in front of a cathedral. Beggars are crowding about the entrance. In the background are seen crowds of people.

FIRST BEGGAR. Will the Tsar come out soon?

BLIND MAN. Don't you hear them singing a requiem for the dead Tsar's soul? They have sung so many that his memory is eternal by now. He will come out soon?

SECOND BEGGAR. Who is celebrating the mass?

BLIND MAN. Ioff of Rostoff is officiating. There are rumors that he will be made Metropolitan, and His Holiness will be unfrocked.

FIRST BEGGAR. Will Dionisy be unfrocked?

BLIND MAN. Yes. Dionisy and Varlaam of Krutits will be unfrocked. They have incurred Godunoff's displeasure by siding with the Shouiskys.

THIRD BEGGAR [*on crutches, elbowing his way to the front*] Brothers, have you heard what is going on in the Red Square?

BLIND MAN. What is going on there?

THIRD BEGGAR. They are decapitating the merchants.

FIRST BEGGAR. What merchants?

THIRD BEGGAR. The Nogaieffs! Krassilnikoff! The Golubs, father and son! Others are being brought!

ALL. God's will be done! Why?

THIRD BEGGAR. Because they sided with the Shouiskys. The Shouiskys themselves are already in prison.

FIRST BEGGAR. God have mercy upon them! What did the Tsar say?

THIRD BEGGAR. Godunoff overruled the Tsar's wishes!

ALL. Stand back! Stand back! Here comes the Tsarina!

[*The beggars step to one side. Irina approaches with Princess Mstislavskaya, her ladies-in-waiting following. The Steward walks ahead and distributes alms.*]

IRINA. Wait here, princess. When the Tsar comes out, bow low to him and beg him to show mercy to your uncle.

PRINCESS. Almighty Tsarina! May God reward you for having brought me here!

IRINA. Do not be afraid, child. The Tsar is a kindly man. Why do you tremble so? Let me straighten out your clothes. Look how you have deranged your hair.

PRINCESS. Mother Tsarina, I am so afraid. Tell me what to say to the Tsar.

IRINA. Speak straight from your heart, child. Where is your fiancé? He should be with you now.

PRINCESS. I have not seen him, Tsarina, since the night, the hour when . . . [*She covers her face with her hands and sobs.*]

IRINA. Poor child! He is not any happier than you! He would gladly die, no doubt, to undo what he has done!

PRINCESS. May the holy Virgin bless you for your pity! [*All the bells peal. The Tsar's courtiers come from the cathedral, two of them distributing alms. Fyodor follows. The Princess speaks in a whisper*] Now, Tsarina?

IRINA. Not yet. Wait a little, child. You see, he is about to pray.

FYODOR [*kneels, facing the cathedral*] Oh, Tsar, my father! You who have atoned for your sins by endless repentance and suffering, you are now in Heaven, in God's presence! You knew how to reign! Inspire me! Imbue me with one particle of your strength and teach me how to be Tsar! [*Rises and starts to go.*]

IRINA [*to Princess*] Now, Princess!

PRINCESS [*throws herself at Fyodor's feet*] Almighty Tsar, have mercy!

FYODOR. What is it, young princess? Get up, get up!

PRINCESS. Spare my uncle!

FYODOR. Who are you? Who is your uncle?

PRINCESS. Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky!

FYODOR. So you are Princess Mstislavskaya? Yes, yes, I recognize you.

IRINA [*throwing herself on her knees*] Dear husband! She joins me in my prayer for Prince Ivan Petrovitch!

FYODOR. Irina! What is the matter with you? Irina, get up! Get up, both of you! I shall pardon Prince Ivan Petrovitch, but he must remain in prison for a while.

IRINA. Dear husband, pardon him now. Send for him at once! Command him to defend Moscow as he defended Pskoff in former days.

FYODOR. All right, Irina, I myself wished to send for him — I meant to send for him a little later — but for your sake, Irina, I shall send for him at once. [*To Godunoff*] Boris, send for him!

GODUNOFF. Almighty Tsar, you yourself have permitted us to try the Shouiskys. The trial has begun.

FYODOR. It must be stopped at once.

GODUNOFF. But, Almighty Tsar —

FYODOR. You heard my command!

GODUNOFF. Almighty Tsar!

FYODOR. You have chosen an inopportune time to go

against my wishes. From to-day on I shall be Tsar! I will be glad to listen to all advice and suggestions, but only hear them, not obey them. Where is Prince Ivan's warden? Where is Prince Tureynin?

KLESHNIN. Here he comes. [*Tureynin approaches.*]

FYODOR [*to Tureynin*] All the Shouiskys are to be released immediately. Ivan Petrovitch is to be brought to me at once. [*Tureynin does not budge*] You have heard? What are you waiting for?

TUREYNIN. Almighty Tsar!

FYODOR. How dare you stand before me without moving when I order you to do something?

TUREYNIN. Almighty Tsar, I am powerless to execute your command — Ivan Petrovitch —

FYODOR. Well?

TUREYNIN. Last night he —

FYODOR. Last night — what? Speak! Well? What?

TUREYNIN. Last night he hanged himself.

PRINCESS. Dear Mother of God!

TUREYNIN. We are to blame. We should have watched him more carefully. We were on the lookout so that the people might not rescue him. Yesterday we repulsed the crowds. They came with the merchants, commanded by Shakhovskoy, and had I not shot him dead, they would have broken in.

[*Princess faints.*]

FYODOR. [*In a terrible rage, to Tureynin*] Prince Shouisky hanged himself? Ivan Petrovitch? You lie. He did not kill himself. He was strangled! [*Seizes Tureynin by the collar with both hands*] You strangled him! Murderer! Beast! [*To Godunoff*] Did you know this?

GODUNOFF. God is my witness — I knew nothing!

FYODOR. Executioners! Let a scaffold be erected! Here! At once! In front of me! At once! I was

lenient with you too long! The time has come for me to remember whose blood is running in my veins. Not without reason did my late father become suddenly a harsh tyrant! His courtiers made him the harsh man he was — you will remember him!

[*Messenger, his clothes covered with dust, holding a paper in his hand, approaches Godunoff hurriedly.*]

MESSENGER. From Uglitch — to Boris Fyodorovitch Godunoff!

FYODOR [*tearing the paper out of his hands*] Give it to me! When the Tsar himself stands before you, Boris does not exist! [*Looks at the paper, and begins to tremble*] Irinuskha — my eyes are growing weak — I can hardly see — it seems to me that I read wrong — my sight is getting dim — you had better read it!

IRINA [*glancing at the paper*] Merciful God!

FYODOR. What is it, Irina? Well?

IRINA. Tsarievitch Dimitry —

FYODOR. Fell on a knife? And stabbed himself to death? Is that it?

IRINA. Yes, Fyodor, yes.

FYODOR. In an epileptic fit he fell on a knife? Is it really true, Irina? Perhaps you did not read right — give me the paper! [*Takes the paper and glances at it, then drops it*] To death — to death — yes — he stabbed himself to death! I cannot believe it! Is not all this a dream? Brother Dimitry was to me like a son — you and I have no children, Irina!

IRINA. God has plunged all Russia into sorrow!

FYODOR. I loved him like a son. I was anxious to take him along with me, but I left him there, in Uglitch. . . . Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky warned me not to leave him. What will he say now? Ah — I forgot! He will never speak again — he is dead!

GODUNOFF [*who in the meanwhile has picked up the paper and read it*] Almighty Tsar . . .

FYODOR. Did you not say he strangled himself? While Dimitry stabbed himself? Irina — why — suppose that . . .

GODUNOFF. Tsar, you must send some one to Uglitch at once.

FYODOR. What for? I will go there myself. I want to see Dimitry myself. With my own eyes! I believe nobody.

[*Soldier approaches Godunoff.*]

SOLDIER. Signal fires are sending up smoke on the road to Serpukhovsk!

GODUNOFF. Almighty Tsar, the Khan is coming. Within a few hours his troops will surround Moscow. You cannot leave now.

KLESHNIN. Almighty Tsar, send me, your humble servant! Little Father, although I am a simple man, I will report to you whatever I see.

GODUNOFF. Prince Vassily Ivanovitch Shouisky might be trusted with the investigation of this matter. Let them both go to Uglitch and find out who is to blame for this misfortune.

FYODOR [*taken aback*] Really? You really want to send Vassily Shouisky to Uglitch? Send a nephew of the man whom you . . . whom they last night . . . [*Embraces Godunoff*] Brother-in-law! Forgive me! I stand guilty before you! Forgive me — my thoughts were tangled up — I became confused — I cannot tell truth from untruth! My Irinushka, come to me. Petrovitch, go with Prince Vassily. Prince Vassily, what was I trying to say to you? I forget. Yes, I remember now. Last week I sent Dimitry some toys — [*Weeps*] I would like to know . . . I would like to know . . . did he have time . . . to . . .

PRINCESS [*being led by some ladies-in-waiting*] All is over! My fiancé was shot — my uncle strangled —

IRINA. Child, you will come to me. You will be to me as my own daughter.

PRINCESS. Tsarina, I would like to take the veil. . . .

FYODOR. Yes, Princess, yes, take the veil! Leave this world! There is no truth in it. I myself would gladly leave it. . . . I am afraid to live in it. . . . Irina . . . save me, Irina!

[*The ladies-in-waiting lead the Princess away.*]

IRINA. Dear husband Fyodor! In prayer alone can we ask God to grant us consolation!

FYODOR. In prayer? Yes, Irina! I will go to a monastery . . . I shall pray . . .

IRINA. You cannot do it, dear husband Fyodor! You have no successor to the throne.

FYODOR. Yes. I am the last of my dynasty — the last one — what is there for me to do, Irina?

IRINA. Dear husband, you have no choice. Boris alone can administer the affairs of this kingdom, he alone. Leave in his hands the burden and responsibilities of government.

FYODOR. Yes, yes, Irina. I shall no longer interfere in anything.

GODUNOFF [*in a whisper, to Irina*] Our paths have met!

IRINA. If only they had never, never met!

[*A blowing of trumpets. Mstislavsky enters, in steel armor and helmet. Godunoff's armorer brings him his weapons.*]

MSTISLAVSKY [*to Godunoff*] Sir, the troops are in the field, awaiting your command!

GODUNOFF [*arming himself*] On, to the fight! [*The noblemen leave.*]

MSTISLAVSKY. Will you yourself lead us against the Khan?

GODUNOFF. Noble Prince Mstislavsky! I am a statesman, you a warrior! From now on you are the man on horseback — to defend Russia. You are our chieftain — lead on to battle — I shall follow you like a soldier! [*Leaves with Mstislavsky. Crowds run after them. Fyodor and Irina remain alone on the stage with a few beggars.*]

FYODOR. Irina, you and I remain childless! Through my fault we lost my brother. I am the last scion of that branch of my family which has ruled Russia. My race will die with me. If Ivan Petrovitch Shouisky were alive, I would have willed the throne to him. But now God knows in whose hands it is going to fall. Everything has happened through my fault, everything! And I — strove to do good, Irina! I longed to establish complete peace, to straighten out everything — God, God! Why did you make me Tsar?

CURTAIN.

THE LOWER DEPTHS

BY

MAXIM GORKY

INTRODUCTION

De profundis ad te clamavi. In this phrase, with his penchant for epitome, the late James Huneker summarized the masterpiece of Russia's single living master of the drama, Maxim Gorky, as he saw it in Berlin under the German title of "Nachtasyl" or "Night Lodging." "Na Dnye" is the Russian — literally "On the Bottom." Partly because "The Lower Depths" is a more faithful rendering of the original than "Night Lodging" and partly because it implies so vividly the play's keynote as the shrewd Huneker detected it beneath a guise alien to both Russian and English, the title adopted by Laurence Irving for the British version has been preferred for its introduction to American audiences by the company which discovered it and first set it on its stage in Moscow, December 31 (our calendar), 1902.

In "The Lower Depths" more than in any other single play throughout its history, the Moscow Art Theatre concentrates its dramatic ideals and methods, its esthetic theory and practice, and through the production of this play it most emphatically justifies its artistic faith in spiritual or psychological realism as a dramatic medium of expression. The plays of Tchekhoff, of course, serve the same ends, but no single one of them does so quite as richly as does Gorky's masterpiece. At the hands of Stanislavsky and his associates, "The Lower Depths" draws much of its convincing power from its unusual use of and dependence on the channels of expression which are peculiar to the art of the theatre. It is almost wholly independent of drama as literature. Less than any play I know, is it possible to imagine its potential effect in the theatre from a reading of its printed lines.

In my book, "The Russian Theatre," I have thus analyzed this factor:

"'The Lower Depths' is not so much a matter of utterable line and recountable gesture as it is of the intangible flow of human souls in endlessly shifting contact with one another. Awkward but eloquent pauses and emphases, the scarcely perceptible stress or dulling of word or gesture, the nuances and the shadings of which life is mostly made and by which it reveals its meaning — these, and the instinctive understanding of the vision of the playwright by those who seek to interpret him, are the incalculable and unrecordable channels through which 'The Lower Depths' becomes articulate at the Moscow Art Theatre."

Just as this theatre discovered or, rather, rescued Tchekhoff as a dramatist, so it first stood sponsor for the author of "Foma Gordeyeff" as a playwright. During the first half of the season of 1902-1903, two of his plays were produced — "Smug Citizens" and "The Lower Depths." The latter was recognized at once as a work of supreme merit and moment. Tchekhoff himself had written to its youthful author five months before its première: "I have read your play. It is new and unmistakably fine. The second act is very good, it is the best, the strongest, and when I was reading it, especially the end, I almost danced with joy." At the première, the rival dramatist's verdict was publicly ratified, for Gorky was called before the curtain twenty times, and the press was unanimously enthusiastic. The play has held its place in the repertory of the Moscow Art Theatre ever since, and eight of its most important rôles are still played by those who created them, just two decades ago.

Miss Covan's translation of this play, I believe, deserves particular attention. There have been numerous translations, differing only in the nature of their ineptitude. Here for the first time, the vigor, the virility,

the humanity and the humor of the original survive the transfer from the Russian tongue to our own, without mysterious and vaguely symbolic "meanings" gratuitously appended. As nearly as it is possible with printed words to convey the impression which Gorky desires and obtains through the intangible media of the living stage, the following version succeeds. I realized for the first time, as I read it, that the overwhelming impression of the play at the hands of the Moscow Art Theatre is due as much to the genius of the playwright as to that of his interpreters.

THE EDITOR.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

MIKHAIL IVANOFF KOSTILYOFF — *Keeper of a night lodging.*
VASSILISA KARPOVNA — *His wife.*
NATASHA — *Her sister.*
MIEDVIEDIEFF — *Her uncle, a policeman.*
VASKA PEPEL — *A young thief.*
ANDREI MITRITCH KLESHTCH — *A locksmith.*
ANNA — *His wife.*
NASTYA — *A street-walker.*
KVASHNYA — *A vendor of meat-pies.*
BUBNOFF — *A cap-maker.*
THE BARON.
SATINE.
THE ACTOR.
LUKA — *A pilgrim.*
ALYOSHKA — *A shoemaker.*
KRIVOY ZOB, THE TARTAR } *Porters.*
NIGHT LODGERS, TRAMPS AND OTHERS.

The action takes place in a Night Lodging and in "The Waste," an area in its rear.

ACT ONE.

A cellar resembling a cave. The ceiling, which merges into stone walls, is low and grimy, and the plaster and paint are peeling off. There is a window, high up on the right wall, from which comes the light. The right corner, which constitutes Pepel's room, is partitioned off by thin boards. Close to the corner of this room is Bubnoff's wooden bunk. In the left corner stands a large Russian stove. In the stone wall, left, is a door leading to the kitchen where live Kvashnya, the Baron, and Nastya. Against the wall, between the stove and the door, is a large bed covered with dirty chintz. Bunks line the walls. In the foreground, by the left wall, is a block of wood with a vise and a small anvil fastened to it, and another smaller block of wood somewhat further towards the back. Kleshtch is seated on the smaller block, trying keys into old locks. At his feet are two large bundles of various keys, wired together, also a battered tin samovar, a hammer, and pincers. In the centre are a large table, two benches, and a stool, all of which are of dirty, unpainted wood. Behind the table Kvashnya is busying herself with the samovar. The Baron sits chewing a piece of black bread, and Nastya occupies the stool, leans her elbows on the table, and reads a tattered book. In the bed, behind curtains, Anna lies coughing. Bubnoff is seated on his bunk, attempting to shape a pair of old trousers with the help of an ancient hat shape which he holds between his knees. Scattered about him are pieces of buckram, oilcloth, and rags. Satine, just awakened, lies in his bunk, grunting. On top of the

stove, the Actor, invisible to the audience, tosses about and coughs.

It is an early spring morning.

THE BARON. And then?

KVASHNYA. No, my dear, said I, keep away from me with such proposals. I've been through it all, you see — and not for a hundred baked lobsters would I marry again!

BUBNOFF [*to Satine*] What are you grunting about? [*Satine keeps on grunting*]

KVASHNYA. Why should I, said I, a free woman, my own mistress, enter my name into somebody else's passport and sell myself into slavery — no! Why — I wouldn't marry a man even if he were an American prince!

KLESHTCH. You lie!

KVASHNYA. Wha-at?

KLESHTCH. You lie! You're going to marry Abramka. . . .

THE BARON [*snatching the book out of Nastya's hand and reading the title*] "Fatal Love" . . . [*Laughs*]

NASTYA [*stretching out her hand*] Give it back — give it back! Stop fooling!

[*The Baron looks at her and waves the book in the air*]

KVASHNYA [*to Kleshtch*] You crimson goat, you — calling me a liar! How dare you be so rude to me?

THE BARON [*hitting Nastya on the head with the book*] Nastya, you little fool!

NASTYA [*reaching for the book*] Give it back!

KLESHTCH. Oh — what a great lady . . . but you'll marry Abramka just the same — that's all you're waiting for . . .

Fisher, Moscow

A SCENE IN ACT I OF MAXIM GORKY'S MASTERPIECE, "THE LOWER DEPTHS," AT THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE. STANISLAVSKY IN THE RÔLE OF SATINE SITS ON THE TABLE

KVASHNYA. Sure! Anything else? You nearly beat your wife to death!

KLESHTCH. Shut up, you old bitch! It's none of your business!

KVASHNYA. Ho-ho! can't stand the truth, can you?

THE BARON. They're off again! Nastya, where are you?

NASTYA [*without lifting her head*] Hey — go away!

ANNA [*putting her head through the curtains*] The day has started. For God's sake, don't row!

KLESHTCH. Whining again!

ANNA. Every blessed day . . . let me die in peace, can't you?

BUBNOFF. Noise won't keep you from dying.

KVASHNYA [*walking up to Anna*] Little mother, how did you ever manage to live with this wretch?

ANNA. Leave me alone — get away from me. . . .

KVASHNYA. Well, well! You poor soul . . . how's the pain in the chest — any better?

THE BARON. Kvashnya! Time to go to market. . . .

KVASHNYA. We'll go presently. [*To Anna*] Like some hot dumplings?

ANNA. No, thanks. Why should I eat?

KVASHNYA. You must eat. Hot food — good for you! I'll leave you some in a cup. Eat them when you feel like it. Come on, sir! [*To Kleshtch*] You evil spirit! [*Goes into kitchen*]

ANNA [*coughing*] Lord, Lord . . .

THE BARON [*painfully pushing forward Nastya's head*] Throw it away — little fool!

NASTYA [*muttering*] Leave me alone — I don't bother you . . .

[*The Baron follows Kvashnya, whistling.*]

SATINE [*sitting up in his bunk*] Who beat me up yesterday?

BUBNOFF. Does it make any difference who?

SATINE. Suppose they did — but why did they?

BUBNOFF. Were you playing cards?

SATINE. Yes!

BUBNOFF. That's why they beat you.

SATINE. Scoundrels!

THE ACTOR [*raising his head from the top of the stove*] One of these days they'll beat you to death!

SATINE. You're a jackass!

THE ACTOR. Why?

SATINE. Because a man can die only once!

THE ACTOR [*after a silence*] I don't understand —

KLESHTCH. Say! You crawl from that stove — and start cleaning house! Don't play the delicate primrose!

THE ACTOR. None of your business!

KLESHTCH. Wait till Vassilisa comes — she'll show you whose business it is!

THE ACTOR. To hell with Vassilisa! To-day is the Baron's turn to clean. . . . Baron!

[*The Baron comes from the kitchen.*]

THE BARON. I've no time to clean . . . I'm going to market with Kvashnya.

THE ACTOR. That doesn't concern me. Go to the gallows if you like. It's your turn to sweep the floor just the same — I'm not going to do other people's work . . .

THE BARON. Go to blazes! Nastya will do it. Hey there — fatal love! Wake up! [*Takes the book away from Nastya*]

NASTYA [*getting up*] What do you want? Give it

back to me! You scoundrel! And that's a nobleman for you!

THE BARON [*returning the book to her*] Nastya! Sweep the floor for me — will you?

NASTYA [*goes to kitchen*] Not so's you'll notice it!

KVASHNYA [*to the Baron through kitchen door*] Come on — you! They don't need you! Actor! You were asked to do it, and now you go ahead and attend to it — it won't kill you . . .

THE ACTOR. It's always I . . . I don't understand why. . . .

[*The Baron comes from the kitchen, across his shoulders a wooden beam from which hang earthen pots covered with rags.*]

THE BARON. Heavier than ever!

SATINE. It paid you to be born a Baron, eh?

KVASHNYA [*to Actor*] See to it that you sweep up! [*Crosses to outer door, letting the Baron pass ahead*]

THE ACTOR [*climbing down from the stove*] It's bad for me to inhale dust. [*With pride*] My organism is poisoned with alcohol. [*Sits down on a bunk, meditating*]

SATINE. Organism — organon. . . .

ANNA. Andrei Mitritch. . . .

KLESHTCH. What now?

ANNA. Kvashnya left me some dumplings over there — you eat them!

KLESHTCH [*coming over to her*] And you — don't you want any?

ANNA. No. Why should I eat? You're a workman — you need it.

KLESHTCH. Frightened, are you? Don't be! You'll get all right!

ANNA. Go and eat! It's hard on me. . . . I suppose very soon . . .

KLESHTCH [*walking away*] Never mind — maybe you'll get well — you can never tell! [*Goes into kitchen*]

THE ACTOR [*loud, as if he had suddenly awakened*] Yesterday the doctor in the hospital said to me: "Your organism," he said, "is entirely poisoned with alcohol . . ."

SATINE [*smiling*] Organon . . .

THE ACTOR [*stubbornly*] Not organon — organism!

SATINE. Sibylline. . . .

THE ACTOR [*shaking his fist at him*] Nonsense! I'm telling you seriously . . . if the organism is poisoned . . . that means it's bad for me to sweep the floor — to inhale the dust . . .

SATINE. Macrobistic . . . hah!

BUBNOFF. What are you muttering?

SATINE. Words — and here's another one for you — transcendentalistic . . .

BUBNOFF. What does it mean?

SATINE. Don't know — I forgot . . .

BUBNOFF. Then why did you say it?

SATINE. Just so! I'm bored, brother, with human words — all our words. Bored! I've heard each one of them a thousand times surely.

THE ACTOR. In Hamlet they say: "Words, words, words!" It's a good play. I played the grave-digger in it once. . . .

[*Kleshtch comes from the kitchen.*]

KLESHTCH. Will you start playing with the broom?

THE ACTOR. None of your business. [*Striking his chest*] Ophelia! O — remember me in thy prayers!

[*Back stage is heard a dull murmur, cries, and a police whistle. Kleshtch sits down to work, filing screechily.*]

SATINE. I love unintelligible, obsolete words. When I was a youngster — and worked as a telegraph operator — I read heaps of books. . . .

BUBNOFF. Were you really a telegrapher?

SATINE. I was. There are some excellent books — and lots of curious words . . . Once I was an educated man, do you know?

BUBNOFF. I've heard it a hundred times. Well, so you were! That isn't very important! Me — well — once I was a furrier. I had my own shop — what with dyeing the fur all day long, my arms were yellow up to the elbows, brother. I thought I'd never be able ever to get clean again — that I'd go to my grave, all yellow! But look at my hands now — they're plain dirty — that's what!

SATINE. Well, and what then?

BUBNOFF. That's all!

SATINE. What are you trying to prove?

BUBNOFF. Oh, well — just matching thoughts — no matter how much dye you get on yourself, it all comes off in the end — yes, yes —

SATINE. Oh — my bones ache!

THE ACTOR [*sits, nursing his knees*] Education is all rot. Talent is the thing. I knew an actor — who read his parts by heart, syllable by syllable — but he played heroes in a way that . . . why — the whole theatre would rock with ecstasy!

SATINE. Bubnoff, give me five kopecks.

BUBNOFF. I only have two —

THE ACTOR. I say — talent, that's what you need to play heroes. And talent is nothing but faith in yourself, in your own powers —

SATINE. Give me five kopecks and I'll have faith that you're a hero, a crocodile, or a police inspector — Kleshtch, give me five kopecks.

KLESHTCH. Go to hell! All of you!

SATINE. What are you cursing for? I know you haven't a kopeck in the world!

ANNA. Andrei Mitritch — I'm suffocating — I can't breathe —

KLESHTCH. What shall I do?

BUBNOFF. Open the door into the hall.

KLESHTCH. All right. You're sitting on the bunk, I on the floor. You change places with me, and I'll let you open the door. I have a cold as it is.

BUBNOFF [*unconcernedly*] I don't care if you open the door — it's your wife who's asking —

KLESHTCH [*morosely*] I don't care who's asking —

SATINE. My head buzzes — ah — why do people have to hit each other over the heads?

BUBNOFF. They don't only hit you over the head, but over the rest of the body as well. [*Rises*] I must go and buy some thread — our bosses are late to-day — seems as if they've croaked. [*Exit*]

[*Anna coughs; Satine is lying down motionless, his hands folded behind his head.*]

THE ACTOR [*looks about him morosely, then goes to Anna*] Feeling bad, eh?

ANNA. I'm choking —

THE ACTOR. If you wish, I'll take you into the hallway. Get up, then, come! [*He helps her to rise, wraps some sort of a rag about her shoulders, and supports her toward the hall*] It isn't easy. I'm sick myself — poisoned with alchohol . . .

[*Kostilyoff appears in the doorway.*]

KOSTILYOFF. Going for a stroll? What a nice couple — the gallant cavalier and the lady fair!

THE ACTOR. Step aside, you — don't you see that we're invalids?

KOSTILYOFF. Pass on, please! [*Hums a religious tune, glances about him suspiciously, and bends his head to the left as if listening to what is happening in Pepel's room. Kleshtch is jangling his keys and scraping away with his file, and looks askance at the other*] Filing?

KLESHTCH. What?

KOSTILYOFF. I say, are you filing? [*Pause*] What did I want to ask? [*Quick and low*] Hasn't my wife been here?

KLESHTCH. I didn't see her.

KOSTILYOFF [*carefully moving toward Pepel's room*] You take up a whole lot of room for your two rubles a month. The bed — and your bench — yes — you take up five rubles' worth of space, so help me God! I'll have to put another half ruble to your rent —

KLESHTCH. You'll put a noose around my neck and choke me . . . you'll croak soon enough, and still all you think of is half rubles —

KOSTILYOFF. Why should I choke you? What would be the use? God be with you — live and prosper! But I'll have to raise you half a ruble — I'll buy oil for the ikon lamp, and my offering will atone for my sins, and for yours as well. You don't think much of your sins — not much! Oh, Andrushka, you're a wicked man! Your wife is dying because of your wickedness — no one loves you, no one respects you — your work is squeaky, jarring on every one.

KLESHTCH [*shouts*] What do you come here for — just to annoy me?

[*Satine grunts loudly.*]

KOSTILYOFF [*with a start*] God, what a noise!

[*The Actor enters.*]

THE ACTOR. I've put her down in the hall and wrapped her up.

KOSTILYOFF. You're a kindly fellow. That's good. Some day you'll be rewarded for it.

THE ACTOR. When?

KOSTILYOFF. In the Beyond, little brother — there all our deeds will be reckoned up.

THE ACTOR. Suppose you reward me right now?

KOSTILYOFF. How can I do that?

THE ACTOR. Wipe out half my debt.

KOSTILYOFF. He-ho! You're always jesting, darling — always poking fun . . . can kindliness of heart be repaid with gold? Kindliness — it's above all other qualities. But your debt to me — remains a debt. And so you'll have to pay me back. You ought to be kind to me, an old man, without seeking for reward!

THE ACTOR. You're a swindler, old man! [*Goes into kitchen*]

[*Kleshtch rises and goes into the hall.*]

KOSTILYOFF [*to Satine*] See that squeaker — ? He ran away — he doesn't like me!

SATINE. Does anybody like you besides the Devil?

KOSTILYOFF [*laughing*] Oh — you're so quarrelsome! But I like you all — I understand you all, my unfortunate down-trodden, useless brethren . . . [*Suddenly, rapidly*] Is Vaska home?

SATINE. See for yourself —

KOSTILYOFF [*goes to the door and knocks*] Vaska!

[*The Actor appears at the kitchen door, chewing something.*]

PEPEL. Who is it?

KOSTILYOFF. It's I — I, Vaska!

PEPEL. What do you want?

KOSTILYOFF [*stepping aside*] Open!

SATINE [*without looking at Kostilyoff*] He'll open — and she's there —

[*The Actor makes a grimace.*]

KOSTILYOFF [*in a low, anxious tone*] Eh? Who's there? What?

SATINE. Speaking to me?

KOSTILYOFF. What did you say?

SATINE. Oh — nothing — I was just talking to myself —

KOSTILYOFF. Take care, brother. Don't carry your joking too far! [*Knocks loudly at door*] Vassily!

PEPEL [*opening door*] Well? What are you disturbing me for?

KOSTILYOFF [*peering into room*] I — you see —

PEPEL. Did you bring the money?

KOSTILYOFF. I've something to tell you —

PEPEL. Did you bring the money?

KOSTILYOFF. What money? Wait —

PEPEL. Why — the seven rubles for the watch — well?

KOSTILYOFF. What watch, Vaska? Oh, you —

PEPEL. Look here. Yesterday, before witnesses, I sold you a watch for ten rubles, you gave me three — now let me have the other seven. What are you blinking for? You hang around here — you disturb people — and don't seem to know yourself what you're after.

KOSTILYOFF. Sh-sh! Don't be angry, Vaska. The watch — it is —

SATINE. Stolen!

KOSTILYOFF [*sternly*] I do not accept stolen goods — how can you imagine —

PEPEL [*taking him by the shoulder*] What did you disturb me for? What do you want?

KOSTILYOFF. I don't want — anything. I'll go — if you're in such a state —

PEPEL. Be off, and bring the money!

KOSTILYOFF. What ruffians! I — I — [*Exit*]

THE ACTOR. What a farce!

SATINE. That's fine — I like it.

PEPEL. What did he come here for?

SATINE [*laughing*] Don't you understand? He's looking for his wife. Why don't you beat him up once and for all, Vaska?

PEPEL. Why should I let such trash interfere with my life?

SATINE. Show some brains! And then you can marry Vassilisa — and become our boss —

PEPEL. Heavenly bliss! And you'd smash up my household and, because I'm a soft-hearted fool, you'll drink up everything I possess. [*Sits on a bunk*] Old devil — woke me up — I was having such a pleasant dream. I dreamed I was fishing — and I caught an enormous trout — such a trout as you only see in dreams! I was playing him — and I was so afraid the line would snap. I had just got out the gaff — and I thought to myself — in a moment —

SATINE. It wasn't a trout, it was Vassilisa —

THE ACTOR. He caught Vassilisa a long time ago.

PEPEL [*angrily*] You can all go to the devil — and Vassilisa with you —

[*Kleshtch comes from the hall.*]

KLESHTCH. Devilishly cold!

THE ACTOR. Why didn't you bring Anna back? She'll freeze, out there —

KLESHTCH. Natasha took her into the kitchen —

THE ACTOR. The old man will kick her out —

KLESHTCH [*sitting down to his work*] Well — Natasha will bring her in here —

SATINE. Vassily — give me five kopecks!

THE ACTOR [*to Satine*] Oh, you — always five kopecks — Vassya — give us twenty kopecks —

PEPEL. I'd better give it to them now before they ask for a ruble. Here you are!

SATINE. Gibraltar! There are no kindlier people in the world than thieves!

KLESHTCH [*morosely*] They earn their money easily — they don't work —

SATINE. Many earn it easily, but not many part with it so easily. Work? Make work pleasant — and maybe I'll work too. Yes — maybe. When work's a pleasure, life's, too. When it's toil, then life is a drudge. [*To the Actor*] You, Sardanapalus! Come on!

THE ACTOR. Let's go, Nebuchadnezzar! I'll get as drunk as forty thousand topers!

[*They leave.*]

PEPEL [*yawning*] Well, how's your wife?

KLESHTCH. It seems as if soon — [*Pause.*]

PEPEL. Now I look at you — seems to me all that filing and scraping of yours is useless.

KLESHTCH. Well — what else can I do?

PEPEL. Nothing.

KLESHTCH. How can I live?

PEPEL. People manage, somehow.

KLESHTCH. Them? Call them people? Muck and dregs — that's what they are! I'm a workman — I'm ashamed even to look at them. I've slaved since I was a child. . . . D'you think I shan't be able to tear myself

away from here? I'll crawl out of here, even if I have to leave my skin behind — but crawl out I will! Just wait . . . my wife'll die . . . I've lived here six months, and it seems like six years.

PEPEL. Nobody here's any worse off than you . . . say what you like . . .

KLESHTCH. No worse is right. They've neither honor nor conscience.

PEPEL [*indifferently*] What good does it do — honor or conscience? Can you get them on their feet instead of on their uppers — through honor and conscience? Honor and conscience are needed only by those who have power and energy . . .

BUBNOFF [*coming back*] Oh — I'm frozen . . .

PEPEL. Bubnoff! Got a conscience?

BUBNOFF. What? A conscience?

PEPEL. Exactly!

BUBNOFF. What do I need a conscience for? I'm not rich.

PEPEL. Just what I said: honor and conscience are for the rich — right! And Kleshtch is upbraiding us because we haven't any!

BUBNOFF. Why — did he want to borrow some of it?

PEPEL. No — he has plenty of his own . . .

BUBNOFF. Oh — are you selling it? You won't sell much around here. But if you had some old boxes, I'd buy them — on credit . . .

PEPEL [*didactically*] You're a jackass, Andrushka! On the subject of conscience you ought to hear Satine — or the Baron . . .

KLESHTCH. I've nothing to talk to them about!

PEPEL. They have more brains than you — even if they're drunkards . . .

BUBNOFF. He who can be drunk and wise at the same time is doubly blessed . . .

PEPEL. Satine says every man expects his neighbor to have a conscience, but — you see — it isn't to any one's advantage to have one — that's a fact.

[*Natasha enters, followed by Luka who carries a stick in his hand, a bundle on his back, a kettle and a teapot slung from his belt.*]

LUKA. How are you, honest folks?

PEPEL [*twisting his mustache*] Aha — Natasha!

BUBNOFF [*to Luka*] I was honest — up to spring before last.

NATASHA. Here's a new lodger . . .

LUKA. Oh, it's all the same to me. Crooks — I don't mind them, either. For my part there's no bad flea — they're all black — and they all jump — . . . Well, dearie, show me where I can stow myself.

NATASHA [*pointing to kitchen door*] Go in there, grand-dad.

LUKA. Thanks, girlie! One place is like another — as long as an old fellow keeps warm, he keeps happy . . .

PEPEL. What an amusing old codger you brought in, Natasha!

NATASHA. A hanged sight more interesting than you! . . . Andrei, your wife's in the kitchen with us — come and fetch her after a while . . .

KLESHTCH. All right — I will . . .

NATASHA. And be a little more kind to her — you know she won't last much longer.

KLESHTCH. I know . . .

NATASHA. Knowing won't do any good — it's terrible — dying — don't you understand?

PEPEL. Well — look at me — I'm not afraid . . .

NATASHA. Oh — you're a wonder, aren't you?

BUBNOFF [*whistling*] Oh — this thread's rotten . . .

PEPEL. Honestly, I'm not afraid! I'm ready to die right now. Knife me to the heart — and I'll die without making a sound . . . even gladly — from such a pure hand . . .

NATASHA [*going out*] Spin that yarn for some one else!

BUBNOFF. Oh — that thread is rotten — rotten —

NATASHA [*at hallway door*] Don't forget your wife, Andrei!

KLESHTCH. All right.

PEPEL. She's a wonderful girl!

BUBNOFF. She's all right.

PEPEL. What makes her so curt with me? Anyway — she'll come to no good here . . .

BUBNOFF. Through you — sure!

PEPEL. Why through me? I feel sorry for her . . .

BUBNOFF. As the wolf for the lamb!

PEPEL. You lie! I feel very sorry for her . . . very . . . very sorry! She has a tough life here — I can see that . . .

KLESHTCH. Just wait till Vassilisa catches you talking to her!

BUBNOFF. Vassilisa? She won't give up so easily what belongs to her — she's a cruel woman!

PEPEL [*stretching himself on the bunk*] You two prophets can go to hell!

KLESHTCH. Just wait — you'll see!

LUKA [*singing in the kitchen*] "In the dark of the night the way is black . . ."

KLESHTCH. Another one who yelps!

PEPEL. It's dreary! Why do I feel so dreary? You

live — and everything seems all right. But suddenly a cold chill goes through you — and then everything gets dreary . . .

BUBNOFF. Dreary? Hm-hm —

PEPEL. Yes — yes —

LUKA [*sings*] "The way is black . . ."

PEPEL. Old fellow! Hey there!

LUKA [*looking from kitchen door*] You call me?

PEPEL. Yes. Don't sing!

LUKA [*coming in*] You don't like it?

PEPEL. When people sing well I like it —

LUKA. In other words —I don't sing well?

PEPEL. Evidently!

LUKA. Well, well — and I thought I sang well. That's always the way: a man imagines there's one thing he can do well, and suddenly he finds out that other people don't think so . . .

PEPEL [*laughs*] That's right . . .

BUBNOFF. First you say you feel dreary — and then you laugh!

PEPEL. None of your business, raven!

LUKA. Who do they say feels dreary?

PEPEL. I do.

[*The Baron enters.*]

LUKA. Well, well — out there in the kitchen there's a girl reading and crying! That's so! Her eyes are wet with tears . . . I say to her: "What's the matter, darling?" And she says: "It's so sad!" "What's so sad?" say I. "The book!" says she. — And that's how people spend their time. Just because they're bored . . .

THE BARON. She's a fool!

PEPEL. Have you had tea, Baron?

THE BARON. Yes. Go on!

PEPEL. Well — want me to open a bottle?

THE BARON. Of course. Go on!

PEPEL. Drop on all fours, and bark like a dog!

THE BARON. Fool! What's the matter with you? Are you drunk?

PEPEL. Go on — bark a little! It'll amuse me. You're an aristocrat. You didn't even consider us human formerly, did you?

THE BARON. Go on!

PEPEL. Well — and now I am making you bark like a dog — and you will bark, won't you?

THE BARON. All right. I will. You jackass! What pleasure can you derive from it since I myself know that I have sunk almost lower than you. You should have made me drop on all fours in the days when I was still above you.

BUBNOFF. That's right . . .

LUKA. I say so, too!

BUBNOFF. What's over, is over. Remain only trivialities. We know no class distinctions here. We've shed all pride and self-respect. Blood and bone — man — just plain man — that's what we are!

LUKA. In other words, we're all equal . . . and you, friend, were you really a Baron?

THE BARON. Who are you? A ghost?

LUKA [*laughing*] I've seen counts and princes in my day — this is the first time I meet a baron — and one who's decaying — at that!

PEPEL [*laughing*] Baron, I blush for you!

THE BARON. It's time you knew better, Vassily . . .

LUKA. Hey-hey — I look at you, brothers — the life you're leading . . .

BUBNOFF. Such a life! As soon as the sun rises, our voices rise, too — in quarrels!

THE BARON. We've all seen better days — yes! I used to wake up in the morning and drink my coffee in bed — coffee — with cream! Yes —

LUKA. And yet we're all human beings. Pretend all you want to, put on all the airs you wish, but man you were born, and man you must die. And as I watch I see that the wiser people get, the busier they get — and though from bad to worse, they still strive to improve — stubbornly —

THE BARON. Who are you, old fellow? Where do you come from?

LUKA. I?

THE BARON. Are you a tramp?

LUKA. We're all of us tramps — why — I've heard said that the very earth we walk on is nothing but a tramp in the universe.

THE BARON [*severely*] Perhaps. But have you a passport?

LUKA [*after a short pause*] And what are you — a police inspector?

PEPEL [*delighted*] You scored, old fellow! Well, Barosha, you got it this time!

BUBNOFF. Yes — our little aristocrat got his!

THE BARON [*embarrassed*] What's the matter? I was only joking, old man. Why, brother, I haven't a passport, either.

BUBNOFF. You lie!

THE BARON. Oh — well — I have some sort of papers — but they have no value —

LUKA. They're papers just the same — and no papers are any good —

PEPEL. Baron — come on to the saloon with me —

THE BARON. I'm ready. Good-bye, old man — you old scamp —

LUKA. Maybe I am one, brother —

PEPEL [*near doorway*] Come on — come on!

[*Leaves, Baron following him quickly.*]

LUKA. Was he really once a Baron?

BUBNOFF. Who knows? A gentleman — ? Yes. That much he's even now. Occasionally it sticks out. He never got rid of the habit.

LUKA. Nobility is like small-pox. A man may get over it — but it leaves marks . . .

BUBNOFF. He's all right all the same — occasionally he kicks — as he did about your passport . . .

[*Alyoshka comes in, slightly drunk, with a concertina in his hand, whistling.*]

ALYOSHKA. Hey there, lodgers!

BUBNOFF. What are you yelling for?

ALYOSHKA. Excuse me — I beg your pardon! I'm a well-bred man —

BUBNOFF. On a spree again?

ALYOSHKA. Right you are! A moment ago Medyakin, the precinct captain, threw me out of the police station and said: "Look here — I don't want as much as a smell of you to stay in the streets — d'you hear?" I'm a man of principles, and the boss croaks at me — and what's a boss anyway — pah! — it's all bosh — the boss is a drunkard. I don't make any demands on life. I want nothing — that's all. Offer me one ruble, offer me twenty — it doesn't affect me. [*Nastya comes from the kitchen*] Offer me a million — I won't take it! And to think that I, a respectable man, should be ordered about by a pal of mine — and he a drunkard! I won't have it — I won't!

[*Nastya stands in the doorway, shaking her head at Alyoshka.*]

LUKA [*good-naturedly*] Well, boy, you're a bit confused —

BUBNOFF. Aren't men fools!

ALYOSHKA [*stretches out on the floor*] Here, eat me up alive — and I don't want anything. I'm a desperate man. Show me one better! Why am I worse than others? There! Medyakin said: "If you show yourself on the streets I smash your face!" And yet I shall go out — I'll go — and stretch out in the middle of the street — let them choke me — I don't want a thing!

NASTYA. Poor fellow — only a boy — and he's already putting on such airs —

ALYOSHKA [*kneeling before her*] Lady! Mademoiselle! *Parlez français — ? Prix courrant?* I'm on a spree —

NASTYA [*in a loud whisper*] Vassilisa!

VASSILISA [*opens door quickly; to Alyoshka*] You here again?

ALYOSHKA. How do you do — ? Come in — you're welcome —

VASSILISA. I told you, young puppy, that not a shadow of you should stick around here — and you're back — eh?

ALYOSHKA. Vassilisa Karpovna . . . shall I tune up a funeral march for you?

VASSILISA [*seizing him by the shoulders*] Get out!

ALYOSHKA [*moving towards the door*] Wait — you can't put me out this way! I learned this funeral march a little while ago! It's refreshing music . . . wait — you can't put me out like that!

VASSILISA. I'll show whether I can or not. I'll rouse the whole street against you — you foul-mouthed creature — you're too young to bark about me —

ALYOSHKA [*running out*] All right — I'll go —

VASSILISA. Look out — I'll get you yet!

ALYOSHKA [*opens the door and shouts*] Vassilisa Karpovna — I'm not afraid of you — [*Hides*]

[*Luka laughs.*]

VASSILISA. Who are you?

LUKA. A passer-by — a traveler . . .

VASSILISA. Stopping for the night or going to stay here?

LUKA. I'll see.

VASSILISA. Have you a passport?

LUKA. Yes.

VASSILISA. Give it to me.

LUKA. I'll bring it over to your house —

VASSILISA. Call yourself a traveler? If you'd say a tramp — that would be nearer the truth —

LUKA [*sighing*] You're not very kindly, mother!

[*Vassilisa goes to door that leads to Pepel's room, Alyoshka pokes his head through the kitchen door.*]

ALYOSHKA. Has she left?

VASSILISA [*turning around*] Are you still here?

[*Alyoshka disappears, whistling. Nastya and Luka laugh.*]

BUBNOFF [*to Vassilisa*] He isn't here —

VASSILISA. Who?

BUBNOFF. Vaska.

VASSILISA. Did I ask you about him?

BUBNOFF. I noticed you were looking around —

VASSILISA. I am looking to see if things are in order, you see? Why aren't the floors swept yet? How often did I give orders to keep the house clean?

BUBNOFF. It's the actor's turn to sweep —

VASSILISA. Never mind whose turn it is! If the

health inspector comes and fines me, I'll throw out the lot of you —

BUBNOFF [*calmly*] Then how are you going to earn your living?

VASSILISA. I don't want a speck of dirt! [*Goes to kitchen; to Nastya*] What are you hanging round here for? Why's your face all swollen up? Why are you standing there like a dummy? Go on — sweep the floor! Did you see Natalia? Was she here?

NASTYA. I don't know — I haven't seen her . . .

VASSILISA. Bubnoff! Was my sister here?

BUBNOFF. She brought him along.

VASSILISA. That one — was he home?

BUBNOFF. Vassily? Yes — Natalia was here talking to Kleshtch —

VASSILISA. I'm not asking you whom she talked to. Dirt everywhere — filth — oh, you swine! Mop it all up — do you hear? [*Exit rapidly*]

BUBNOFF. What a savage beast she is!

LUKA. She's a lady that means business!

NASTYA. You grow to be an animal, leading such a life — any human being tied to such a husband as hers . . .

BUBNOFF. Well — that tie isn't worrying her any —

LUKA. Does she always have these fits?

BUBNOFF. Always. You see, she came to find her lover — but he isn't home —

LUKA. I guess she was hurt. Oh-ho! Everybody is trying to be boss — and is threatening everybody else with all kinds of punishment — and still there's no order in life . . . and no cleanliness —

BUBNOFF. All the world likes order — but some people's brains aren't fit for it. All the same — the room should be swept — Nastya — you ought to get busy!

NASTYA. Oh, certainly? Anything else? Think I'm your servant? [*Silence*] I'm going to get drunk to-night — dead-drunk!

BUBNOFF. Fine business!

LUKA. Why do you want to get drunk, girlie? A while ago you were crying — and now you say you'll get drunk —

NASTYA [*defiantly*] I'll drink — then I cry again — that's all there's to it!

BUBNOFF. That's nothing!

LUKA. But for what reason — tell me! Every pimple has a cause! [*Nastya remains silent, shaking her head*] Oh — you men — what's to become of you? All right — I'll sweep the place. Where's your broom?

BUBNOFF. Behind the door — in the hall —

[*Luka goes into the hall.*]

Nastinka!

NASTYA. Yes?

BUBNOFF. Why did Vassilisa jump on Alyoshka?

NASTYA. He told her that Vaska was tired of her and was going to get rid of her — and that he's going to make up to Natasha — I'll go away from here — I'll find another lodging-house —

BUBNOFF. Why? Where?

NASTYA. I'm sick of this — I'm not wanted here!

BUBNOFF [*calmly*] You're not wanted anywhere — and, anyway, all people on earth are superfluous —

[*Nastya shakes her head. Rises and slowly, quietly, leaves the cellar. Miedviedieff comes in. Luka, with the broom, follows him.*]

MIEDVIEDIEFF. I don't think I know you —

LUKA. How about the others — d'you know them all?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. I must know everybody in my precinct. But I don't know you.

LUKA. That's because, uncle, the whole world can't stow itself away in your precinct — some of it was bound to remain outside . . . [*Goes into kitchen*]

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*crosses to Bubnoff*] It's true — my precinct is rather small — yet it's worse than any of the very largest. Just now, before getting off duty, I had to bring Alyoshka, the shoemaker, to the station house. Just imagine — there he was, stretched right in the middle of the street, playing his concertina and yelping: "I want nothing, nothing!" Horses going past all the time — and with all the traffic going on, he could easily have been run over — and so on! He's a wild youngster — so I just collared him — he likes to make mischief —

BUBNOFF. Coming to play checkers to-night?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Yes — I'll come — how's Vaska?

BUBNOFF. Same as ever —

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Meaning — he's getting along — ?

BUBNOFF. Why shouldn't he? He's able to get along all right.

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*doubtfully*] Why shouldn't he? [*Luka goes into hallway, carrying a pail*] M-yes — there's a lot of talk about Vaska. Haven't you heard?

BUBNOFF. I hear all sorts of gossip . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF. There seems to have been some sort of talk concerning Vassilisa. Haven't you heard about it?

BUBNOFF. What?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Oh — why — generally speaking. Perhaps you know — and lie. Everybody knows — [*Severely*] You mustn't lie, brother!

BUBNOFF. Why should I lie?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. That's right. Dogs! They say that Vaska and Vassilisa . . . but what's that to me? I'm

not her father. I'm her uncle. Why should they ridicule me? [*Kvashnya comes in*] What are people coming to? They laugh at everything. Aha — you here?

KVASHNYA. Well — my love-sick garrison — ? Bubnoff! He came up to me again on the marketplace and started pestering me about marrying him . . .

BUBNOFF. Go to it! Why not? He has money and he's still a husky fellow.

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Me — ? I should say so!

KVASHNYA. You ruffian! Don't you dare touch my sore spot! I've gone through it once already, darling. Marriage to a woman is just like jumping through a hole in the ice in winter. You do it once, and you remember it the rest of your life . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Wait! There are different breeds of husbands . . .

KVASHNYA. But there's only one of me! When my beloved husband kicked the bucket, I spent the whole day all by my lonely — just bursting with joy. I sat and simply couldn't believe it was true. . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF. If your husband beat you without cause, you should have complained to the police.

KVASHNYA. I complained to God for eight years — and he didn't help.

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Nowadays the law forbids to beat your wife . . . all is very strict these days — there's law and order everywhere. You can't beat up people without due cause. If you beat them to maintain discipline — all right . . .

LUKA [*comes in with Anna*] Well — we finally man aged to get here after all. Oh, you! Why do you, weak as you are, walk about alone? Where's your bunk?

ANNA [*pointing*] Thank you, grand-dad.

KVASHNYA. There — she's married — look at her!

LUKA. The little woman is in very bad shape . . . she was creeping along the hallway, clinging to the wall and moaning — why do you leave her by herself?

KVASHNYA. Oh, pure carelessness on our part, little father — forgive us! Her maid, it appears, went out for a walk . . .

LUKA. Go on — poke fun at me . . . but, all the same, how can you neglect a human being like that? No matter who or what, every human life has its worth . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF. There should be supervision! Suppose she died suddenly — ? That would cause a lot of bother . . . we must look after her!

LUKA. True, sergeant!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Well — yes — though I'm not a sergeant — ah — yet!

LUKA. No! But you carry yourself most martially!

[*Noise of shuffling feet is heard in the hallway. Muffled cries.*]

MIEDVIEDIEFF. What now — a row?

BUBNOFF. Sounds like it?

KVASHNYA. I'll go and see . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF. I'll go, too. It is my duty! Why separate people when they fight? They'll stop sooner or later of their own accord. One gets tired of fighting. Why not let them fight all they want to — freely? They wouldn't fight half as often — if they'd remember former beatings . . .

BUBNOFF [*climbing down from his bunk*] Why don't you speak to your superiors about it?

KOSTILYOFF [*throws open the door and shouts*] Abram! Come quick — Vassilisa is killing Natasha — come quick!

[*Kvashnya, Miedviedieff, and Bubnoff rush into hallway; Luka looks after them, shaking his head.*]

ANNA. Oh God — poor little Natasha . . .

LUKA. Who's fighting out there?

ANNA. Our landladies — they're sisters . . .

LUKA [*crossing to Anna*] Why?

ANNA. Oh — for no reason — except that they're both fat and healthy . . .

LUKA. What's your name?

ANNA. Anna . . . I look at you . . . you're like my father — my dear father . . . you're as gentle as he was — and as soft. . . .

LUKA. Soft! Yes! They pounded me till I got soft! [*Laughs tremulously*]

CURTAIN.

ACT TWO.

Same as Act I — Night.

On the bunks near the stove Satine, the Baron, Krivoy Zob, and the Tartar play cards. Kleshtch and the Actor watch them. Bubnoff, on his bunk, is playing checkers with Miedviedieff. Luka sits on a stool by Anna's bedside. The place is lit by two lamps, one on the wall near the card players, the other is on Bubnoff's bunk.

THE TARTAR. I'll play one more game — then I'll stop . . .

BUBNOFF. Zob! Sing! [*He sings*]

"The sun rises and sets . . ."

ZOB [*joining in*]

"But my prison is dark, dark . . ."

THE TARTAR [*to Satine*] Shuffle the cards — and shuffle them well. We know your kind —

ZOB AND BUBNOFF [*together*]

"Day and night the wardens
Watch beneath my window . . ."

ANNA. Blows — insults — I've had nothing but that all my life long . . .

LUKA. Don't worry, little mother!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Look where you're moving!

BUBNOFF. Oh, yes — that's right . . .

THE TARTAR [*threatening Satine with his fist*] You're

trying to palm a card? I've seen you — you scoundrel . . .

ZOB. Stop it, Hassan! They'll skin us anyway . . . come on, Bubnoff!

ANNA. I can't remember a single day when I didn't go hungry . . . I've been afraid, waking, eating, and sleeping . . . all my life I've trembled — afraid I wouldn't get another bite . . . all my life I've been in rags — all through my wretched life — and why . . .?

LUKA. Yes, yes, child — you're tired — never you mind!

THE ACTOR [*to Zob*] Play the Jack — the Jack, devil take you!

THE BARON. And we play the King!

KLESHTCH. They always win.

SATINE. Such is our habit.

MIEDVIEDIEFF. I have the Queen!

BUBNOFF. And so have I!

ANNA. I'm dying . . .

KLESHTCH. Look, look! Prince, throw up the game — throw it up, I tell you!

THE ACTOR. Can't he play without your assistance?

THE BARON. Look out, Andrushka, or I'll beat the life out of you!

THE TARTAR. Deal once more — the pitcher went after water — and got broke — and so did I!

[*Kleshtch shakes his head and crosses to Bubnoff.*]

ANNA. I keep on thinking — is it possible that I'll suffer in the other world as I did in this — is it possible? There, too?

LUKA. Nothing of the sort! Don't you disturb yourself! You'll rest there . . . be patient. We all suffer, dear, each in our own way. . . . [*Rises and goes quickly into kitchen*]

BUBNOFF [*sings*]

"Watch as long as you please . . ."

ZOB. "I shan't run away . . ."

BOTH [*together*]

"I long to be free, free —
Alas! I cannot break my chains. . . ."

THE TARTAR [*yells*] That card was up his sleeve!

THE BARON [*embarrassed*] Do you want me to shove it up your nose?

THE ACTOR [*emphatically*] Prince! You're mistaken — nobody — ever . . .

THE TARTAR. I saw it! You cheat! I won't play!

SATINE [*gathering up the cards*] Leave us alone, Hassan . . . you knew right along that we're cheats — why did you play with us?

THE BARON. He lost forty kopecks and he yelps as if he had lost a fortune! And a Prince at that!

THE TARTAR [*excitedly*] Then play honest!

SATINE. What for?

THE TARTAR. What do you mean "what for"?

SATINE. Exactly. What for?

THE TARTAR. Don't you know?

SATINE. I don't. Do you?

[*The Tartar spits out, furiously; the others laugh at him.*]

ZOB [*good-naturedly*] You're a funny fellow, Hassan! Try to understand this! If they should begin to live honestly, they'd die of starvation inside of three days.

THE TARTAR. That's none of my business. You must live honestly!

ZOB. They did you brown! Come and let's have tea. . . . [*Sings*]

"O my chains, my heavy chains . . ."

BUBNOFF [*sings*]

"You're my steely, clanking wardens . . ."

ZOB. Come on, Hassanka! [*Leaves the room, singing*]

"I cannot tear you, cannot break you . . ."

[*The Tartar shakes his fist threateningly at the Baron, and follows the other out of the room.*]

SATINE [*to Baron, laughing*] Well, Your Imperial Highness, you've again sat down magnificently in a mud puddle! You've learned a lot — but you're an ignoramus when it comes to palming a card.

THE BARON [*spreading his hands*] The Devil knows how it happened. . . .

THE ACTOR. You're not gifted — you've no faith in yourself — and without that you can never accomplish anything . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF. I've one Queen — and you've two — oh, well . . .

BUBNOFF. One's enough if she has brains — play!

KLESHTCH. You lost, Abram Ivanovitch?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. None of your business — see? Shut up!

SATINE. I've won fifty-three kopecks.

THE ACTOR. Give me three of them . . . though, what'll I do with them?

LUKA [*coming from kitchen*] Well — the Tartar was fleeced all right, eh? Going to have some vodka?

THE BARON. Come with us.

SATINE. I wonder what you'll be like when you're drunk.

LUKA. Same as when I'm sober.

THE ACTOR. Come on, old man — I'll recite verses for you . . .

LUKA. What?

THE ACTOR. Verses. Don't you understand?

LUKA. Verses? And what do I want with verses?

THE ACTOR. Sometimes they're funny — sometimes sad.

SATINE. Well, poet, are you coming? [*Exit with the Baron*]

THE ACTOR. I'm coming. I'll join you. For instance, old man, here's a bit of verse — I forget how it begins — I forget . . . [*brushes his hand across his forehead*]

BUBNOFF. There! Your Queen is lost — go on, play!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. I made the wrong move.

THE ACTOR. Formerly, before my organism was poisoned with alcohol, old man, I had a good memory. But now it's all over with me, brother. I used to declaim these verses with tremendous success — thunders of applause . . . you have no idea what applause means . . . it goes to your head like vodka! I'd step out on the stage — stand this way — [*Strikes a pose*] —I'd stand there and . . . [*Pause*] I can't remember a word — I can't remember! My favorite verses — isn't it ghastly, old man?

LUKA. Yes — is there anything worse than forgetting what you loved? Your very soul is in the thing you love!

THE ACTOR. I've drunk my soul away, old man —

brother, I'm lost . . . and why? Because I had no faith. . . . I'm done with . . .

LUKA. Well — then — cure yourself! Nowadays they have a cure for drunkards. They treat you free of charge, brother. There's a hospital for drunkards — where they're treated for nothing. They've owned up, you see, that even a drunkard is a human being, and they're only too glad to help him get well. Well — then — go to it!

THE ACTOR [*thoughtfully*] Where? Where is it?

LUKA. Oh — in some town or other . . . what do they call it — ? I'll tell you the name presently — only, in the meanwhile, get ready. Don't drink so much! Take yourself in hand — and bear up! And then, when you're cured, you'll begin life all over again. Sounds good, brother, doesn't it, to begin all over again? Well — make up your mind!

THE ACTOR [*smiling*] All over again — from the very beginning — that's fine . . . yes . . . all over again . . . [*Laughs*] Well — then — I can, can't I?

LUKA. Why not? A human being can do anything — if he only makes up his mind.

THE ACTOR [*suddenly, as if coming out of a trance*] You're a queer bird! See you anon! [*Whistles*] Old man — *au revoir!* [*Exit*]

ANNA. Grand-dad!

LUKA. Yes, little mother?

ANNA. Talk to me.

LUKA [*close to her*] Come on — let's chat . . .

[*Kleshtch, glancing around, silently walks over to his wife, looks at her, and makes queer gestures with his hands, as though he wanted to say something.*]

LUKA. What is it, brother?

KLESHTCH [*quietly*] Nothing . . .

[*Crosses slowly to hallway door, stands on the threshold for a few seconds, and exit.*]

LUKA [*looking after him*] Hard on your man, isn't it?

ANNA. He doesn't concern me much . . .

LUKA. Did he beat you?

ANNA. Worse than that — it's he who's killed me —

BUBNOFF. My wife used to have a lover — the scoundrel — how clever he was at checkers!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Hm-hm —

ANNA. Grand-dad! Talk to me, darling — I feel so sick . . .

LUKA. Never mind — it's always like this before you die, little dove — never mind, dear! Just have faith! Once you're dead, you'll have peace — always. There's nothing to be afraid of — nothing. Quiet! Peace! Lie quietly! Death wipes out everything. Death is kindly. You die — and you rest — that's what they say. It is true, dear! Because — where can we find rest on this earth?

[*Pepel enters. He is slightly drunk, dishevelled, and sullen. Sits down on bunk near door, and remains silent and motionless.*]

ANNA. And how is it — there? More suffering?

LUKA. Nothing of the kind! No suffering! Trust me! Rest — nothing else! They'll lead you into God's presence, and they'll say: "Dear God! Behold! Here is Anna, Thy servant!"

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*sternly*] How do you know what they'll say up there? Oh, you . . .

[*Pepel, on hearing Miedviedieff's voice, raises his head and listens.*]

LUKA. Apparently I do know, Mr. Sergeant!

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*conciliatory*] Yes — it's your own affair — though I'm not exactly a sergeant — yet —

BUBNOFF. I jump two!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Damn — play!

LUKA. And the Lord will look at you gently and tenderly and He'll say: "I know this Anna!" Then He'll say: "Take Anna into Paradise. Let her have peace. I know. Her life on earth was hard. She is very weary. Let Anna rest in peace!"

ANNA [*choking*] Grandfather — if it were only so — if there were only rest and peace . . .

LUKA. There won't be anything else! Trust me! Die in joy and not in grief. Death is to us like a mother to small children . . .

ANNA. But — perhaps — perhaps I get well . . . ?

LUKA [*laughing*] Why —? Just to suffer more?

ANNA. But — just to live a little longer . . . just a little longer! Since there'll be no suffering hereafter, I could bear it a little longer down here . . .

LUKA. There'll be nothing in the hereafter . . . but only . . .

PEPEL [*rising*] Maybe yes — maybe no!

ANNA [*frightened*] Oh — God!

LUKA. Hey — Adonis!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Who's that yelping?

PEPEL [*crossing over to him*] I! What of it?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. You yelp needlessly — that's what! People ought to have some dignity!

PEPEL. Block-head! And that's an uncle for you — ho-ho!

LUKA [*to Pepel, in an undertone*] Look here — don't shout — this woman's dying — her lips are already grey — don't disturb her!

PEPEL. I've respect for you, grand-dad. You're all right, you are! You lie well, and you spin pleasant

yarns. Go on lying, brother — there's little fun in this world . . .

BUBNOFF. Is the woman really dying?

LUKA. You think I'm joking?

BUBNOFF. That means she'll stop coughing. Her cough was very disturbing. I jump two!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. I'd like to murder you!

PEPEL. Abramka!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. I'm not Abramka to you!

PEPEL. Abrashka! Is Natasha ill?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. None of your business!

PEPEL. Come — tell me! Did Vassilisa beat her up very badly?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. That's none of your business, either! It's a family affair! Who are you anyway?

PEPEL. Whoever I am, you'll never see Natashka again if I choose!

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*throwing up the game*] What's that? Who are you alluding to? My niece by any chance? You thief!

PEPEL. A thief whom you were never able to catch!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Wait — I'll catch you yet — you'll see — sooner than you think!

PEPEL. If you catch me, God help your whole nest! Do you think I'll keep quiet before the examining magistrate? Every wolf howls! They'll ask me: "Who made you steal and showed you where?" "Mishka Kostilyoff and his wife!" "Who was your fence?" "Mishka Kostilyoff and his wife!"

MIEDVIEDIEFF. You lie! No one will believe you!

PEPEL. They'll believe me all right — because it's the truth! And I'll drag you into it, too. Ha! I'll ruin the lot of you — devils — just watch!

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*confused*] You lie! You lie! And what harm did I do to you, you mad dog?

PEPEL. And what good did you ever do me?

LUKA. That's right!

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*to Luka*] Well — what are you croaking about? Is it any of your business? This is a family matter!

BUBNOFF [*to Luka*] Leave them alone! What do we care if they twist each other's tails?

LUKA [*peacefully*] I meant no harm. All I said was that if a man isn't good to you, then he's acting wrong . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*uncomprehending*] Now then — we all of us here know each other — but you — who are you? [*Frowns and exit*]

LUKA. The cavalier is peeved! Oh-ho, brothers, I see your affairs are a bit tangled up!

PEPEL. He'll run to complain about us to Vassilisa . . .

BUBNOFF. You're a fool, Vassily. You're very bold these days, aren't you? Watch out! It's all right to be bold when you go gathering mushrooms, but what good is it here? They'll break your neck before you know it!

PEPEL. Well — not as fast as all that! You don't catch us Yaroslavl boys napping! If it's going to be war, we'll fight . . .

LUKA. Look here, boy, you really ought to go away from here —

PEPEL. Where? Please tell me!

LUKA. Go to Siberia!

PEPEL. If I go to Siberia, it'll be at the Tsar's expense!

LUKA. Listen! You go just the same! You can

make your own way there. They need your kind out there . . .

PEPEL. My way is clear. My father spent all his life in prison, and I inherited the trait. Even when I was a small child, they called me thief — thief's son.

LUKA. But Siberia is a fine country — a land of gold. Any one who has health and strength and brains can live there like a cucumber in a hot-house.

PEPEL. Old man, why do you always tell lies?

LUKA. What?

PEPEL. Are you deaf? I ask — why do you always lie?

LUKA. What do I lie about?

PEPEL. About everything. According to you, life's wonderful everywhere — but you lie . . . why?

LUKA. Try to believe me. Go and see for yourself. And some day you'll thank me for it. What are you hanging round here for? And, besides, why is truth so important to you? Just think! Truth may spell death to you!

PEPEL. It's all one to me! If that — let it be that!

LUKA. Oh — what a madman! Why should you kill yourself?

BUBNOFF. What are you two jawing about, anyway? I don't understand. What kind of truth do you want, Vaska? And what for? You know the truth about yourself — and so does everybody else . . .

PEPEL. Just a moment! Don't crow! Let him tell me! Listen, old man! Is there a God?

[*Luka smiles silently.*]

BUBNOFF. People just drift along — like shavings on a stream. When a house is built — the shavings are thrown away!

PEPEL. Well? Is there a God? Tell me.

LUKA [*in a low voice*] If you have faith, there is; if you haven't, there isn't . . . whatever you believe in, exists . . .

[*Pepel looks at Luka in staring surprise.*]

BUBNOFF. I'm going to have tea — come on over to the restaurant!

LUKA [*to Pepel*] What are you staring at?

PEPEL. Oh — just because! Wait now — you mean to say . . .

BUBNOFF. Well — I'm off.

[*Goes to door and runs into Vassilisa.*]

PEPEL. So — you . . .

VASSILISA [*to Bubnoff*] Is Nastasya home?

BUBNOFF. No. [*Exit*]

PEPEL. Oh — you've come — ?

VASSILISA [*crossing to Anna*] Is she alive yet?

LUKA. Don't disturb her!

VASSILISA. What are you loafing around here for?

LUKA. I'll go — if you want me to . . .

VASSILISA [*turning towards Pepel's room*] Vassily! I've some business with you . . .

[*Luka goes to hallway door, opens it, and shuts it loudly, then warily climbs into a bunk, and from there to the top of the stove.*]

VASSILISA [*calling from Pepel's room*] Vaska — come here!

PEPEL. I won't come — I don't want to . . .

VASSILISA. Why? What are you angry about?

PEPEL. I'm sick of the whole thing . . .

VASSILISA. Sick of me, too?

PEPEL. Yes! Of you, too!

[*Vassilisa draws her shawl about her, pressing her hands over her breast. Crosses to Anna, looks carefully through the bed curtains, and returns to Pepel.*]

Well — out with it!

VASSILISA. What do you want me to say? I can't force you to be loving, and I'm not the sort to beg for kindness. Thank you for telling me the truth.

PEPEL. What truth?

VASSILISA. That you're sick of me — or isn't it the truth? [*Pepel looks at her silently. She turns to him*] What are you staring at? Don't you recognize me?

PEPEL [*sighing*] You're beautiful, Vassilisa! [*She puts her arm about his neck, but he shakes it off*] But I never gave my heart to you. . . . I've lived with you and all that — But I never really liked you . . .

VASSILISA [*quietly*] That so? Well — ?

PEPEL. What is there to talk about? Nothing. Go away from me!

VASSILISA. Taken a fancy to some one else?

PEPEL. None of your business! Suppose I have — I wouldn't ask you to be my match-maker!

VASSILISA [*significantly*] That's too bad . . . perhaps I might arrange a match . . .

PEPEL [*suspiciously*] Who with?

VASSILISA. You know — why do you pretend? Vassily — let me be frank. [*With lower voice*] I won't deny it — you've offended me . . . it was like a bolt from the blue . . . you said you loved me — and then all of a sudden . . .

PEPEL. It wasn't sudden at all. It's been a long time since I . . . woman, you've no soul! A woman must have a soul . . . we men are beasts — we must be taught — and you, what have you taught me — ?

VASSILISA. Never mind the past! I know — no man

owns his own heart — you don't love me any longer . . . well and good, it can't be helped!

PEPEL. So that's over. We part peaceably, without a row — as it should be!

VASSILISA. Just a moment! All the same, when I lived with you, I hoped you'd help me out of this swamp — I thought you'd free me from my husband and my uncle — from all this life — and perhaps, Vassya, it wasn't you whom I loved — but my hope — do you understand? I waited for you to drag me out of this mire . . .

PEPEL. You aren't a nail — and I'm not a pair of pincers! I thought you had brains — you are so clever — so crafty . . .

VASSILISA [*leaning closely towards him*] Vassa — let's help each other!

PEPEL. How?

VASSILISA [*low and forcibly*] My sister — I know you've fallen for her. . . .

PEPEL. And that's why you beat her up, like the beast you are! Look out, Vassilisa! Don't you touch her!

VASSILISA. Wait. Don't get excited. We can do everything quietly and pleasantly. You want to marry her. I'll give you money . . . three hundred rubles — even more than that . . .

PEPEL [*moving away from her*] Stop! What do you mean?

VASSILISA. Rid me of my husband! Take that noose from around my neck . . .

PEPEL [*whistling softly*] So that's the way the land lies! You certainly planned it cleverly . . . in other words, the grave for the husband, the gallows for the lover, and as for yourself . . .

VASSILISA. Vassya! Why the gallows? It doesn't have to be yourself — but one of your pals! And supposing it were yourself — who'd know? Natalia — just think — and you'll have money — you go away somewhere . . . you free me forever — and it'll be very good for my sister to be away from me — the sight of her enrages me. . . . I get furious with her on account of you, and I can't control myself. I tortured the girl — I beat her up — beat her up so that I myself cried with pity for her — but I'll beat her — and I'll go on beating her!

PEPEL. Beast! Bragging about your beastliness?

VASSILISA. I'm not bragging — I speak the truth. Think now, Vassa. You've been to prison twice because of my husband — through his greed. He clings to me like a bed-bug — he's been sucking the life out of me for the last four years — and what sort of a husband is he to me? He's forever abusing Natasha — calls her a beggar — he's just poison, plain poison, to every one . . .

PEPEL. You spin your yarn cleverly . . .

VASSILISA. Everything I say is true. Only a fool could be as blind as you. . . .

[*Kostilyoff enters stealthily and comes forward noisily.*]

PEPEL [*to Vassilisa*] Oh — go away!

VASSILISA. Think it over! [*Sees her husband*] What? You? Following me?

[*Pepel leaps up and stares at Kostilyoff savagely.*]

KOSTILYOFF. It's I, I! So the two of you were here alone — you were — ah — conversing? [*Suddenly stamps his feet and screams*] Vassilisa — you bitch! You beggar! You damned hag! [*Frightened by his own screams which are met by silence and indifference on the part of the others*] Forgive me, O Lord . . . Vassilisa — again you've led me into the path of sin. . . . I've been look-

ing for you everywhere. It's time to go to bed. You forgot to fill the lamps — oh, you . . . beggar! Swine! [*Shakes his trembling fist at her, while Vassilisa slowly goes to door, glancing at Pepel over her shoulder*]

PEPEL [*to Kostilyoff*] Go away — clear out of here —

KOSTILYOFF [*yelling*] What? I? The Boss? I get out? You thief!

PEPEL [*sullenly*] Go away, Mishka!

KOSTILYOFF. Don't you dare — I — I'll show you.

[*Pepel seizes him by the collar and shakes him. From the stove come loud noises and yawns. Pepel releases Kostilyoff who runs into the hallway, screaming.*]

PEPEL [*jumping on a bunk*] Who is it? Who's on the stove?

LUKA [*raising his head*] Eh?

PEPEL. You?

LUKA [*undisturbed*] I — I myself — oh, dear Jesus!

PEPEL [*shuts hallway door, looks for the wooden closing bar, but can't find it*] The devil! Come down, old man!

LUKA. I'm climbing down — all right . . .

PEPEL [*roughly*] What did you climb on that stove for?

LUKA. Where was I to go?

PEPEL. Why — didn't you go out into the hall?

LUKA. The hall's too cold for an old fellow like myself, brother.

PEPEL. You overheard?

LUKA. Yes — I did. How could I help it? Am I deaf? Well, my boy, happiness is coming your way. Real, good fortune I call it!

PEPEL [*suspiciously*] What good fortune — ?

LUKA. In so far as I was lying on the stove . . .

PEPEL. Why did you make all that noise?

LUKA. Because I was getting warm . . . it was your good luck . . . I thought if only the boy wouldn't make a mistake and choke the old man . . .

PEPEL. Yes — I might have done it . . . how terrible . . .

LUKA. Small wonder! It isn't difficult to make a mistake of that sort.

PEPEL [*smiling*] What's the matter? Did you make the same sort of mistake once upon a time?

LUKA. Boy, listen to me. Send that woman out of your life! Don't let her near you! Her husband — she'll get rid of him herself — and in a shrewder way than you could — yes! Don't you listen to that devil! Look at me! I am bald-headed — know why? Because of all these women. . . . Perhaps I knew more women than I had hair on the top of my head — but this Vassilisa — she's worse than the plague. . . .

PEPEL. I don't understand . . . I don't know whether to thank you — or — well . . .

LUKA. Don't say a word! You won't improve on what I said. Listen: take the one you like by the arm, and march out of here — get out of here — clean out . . .

PEPEL [*sadly*] I can't understand people. Who is kind and who isn't? It's all a mystery to me . . .

LUKA. What's there to understand? There's all breeds of men . . . they all live as their hearts tell them . . . good to-day, bad to-morrow! But if you really care for that girl . . . take her away from here and that's all there is to it. Otherwise go away alone . . . you're young — you're in no hurry for a wife . . .

PEPEL [*taking him by the shoulder*] Tell me! Why do you say all this?

LUKA. Wait. Let me go. I want a look at Anna

. . . she was coughing so terribly . . . [*Goes to Anna's bed, pulls the curtains, looks, touches her. Pepel thoughtfully and distraught, follows him with his eyes*] Merciful Jesus Christ! Take into Thy keeping the soul of this woman Anna, new-comer amongst the blessed!

PEPEL [*softly*] Is she dead?

[*Without approaching, he stretches himself and looks at the bed.*]

LUKA [*gently*] Her sufferings are over! Where's her husband?

PEPEL. In the saloon, most likely . . .

LUKA. Well — he'll have to be told . . .

PEPEL [*shuddering*] I don't like corpses!

LUKA [*going to door*] Why should you like them? It's the living who demand our love — the living . . .

PEPEL. I'm coming with you . . .

LUKA. Are you afraid?

PEPEL. I don't like it . . .

[*They go out quickly. The stage is empty and silent for a few moments. Behind the door is heard a dull, staccato, incomprehensible noise. Then the Actor enters.*]

THE ACTOR [*stands at the open door, supporting himself against the jamb, and shouts*] Hey, old man — where are you — ? I just remembered — listen . . . [*Takes two staggering steps forward and, striking a pose, recites*]

"Good people! If the world cannot find
A path to holy truth,
Glory be to the madman who will enfold all humanity
In a golden dream . . ."

[*Natasha appears in the doorway behind the Actor*] Old man! [*recites*]

"If to-morrow the sun were to forget
To light our earth,
To-morrow then some madman's thought
Would bathe the world in sunshine. . . ."

NATASHA [*laughing*] Scarecrow! You're drunk!

THE ACTOR [*turns to her*] Oh — it's you? Where's the old man, the dear old man? Not a soul here, seems to me . . . Natasha, farewell — right — farewell!

NATASHA [*entering*] Don't wish me farewell, before you've wished me how-d'you-do!

THE ACTOR [*barring her way*] I am going. Spring will come — and I'll be here no longer —

NATASHA. Wait a moment! Where do you propose going?

THE ACTOR. In search of a town — to be cured — And you, Ophelia, must go away! Take the veil! Just imagine — there's a hospital to cure — ah — organisms for drunkards — a wonderful hospital — built of marble — with marble floors . . . light — clean — food — and all gratis! And a marble floor — yes! I'll find it — I'll get cured — and then I shall start life anew. . . . I'm on my way to regeneration, as King Lear said. Natasha, my stage name is . . . Svertchkoff — Zavoloushski . . . do you realize how painful it is to lose one's name? Even dogs have their names . . .

[*Natasha carefully passes the Actor, stops at Anna's bed and looks.*]

To be nameless — is not to exist!

NATASHA. Look, my dear — why — she's dead. . . .

THE ACTOR [*shakes his head*] Impossible . . .

NATASHA [*stepping back*] So help me God — look . . .

BUBNOFF [*appearing in doorway*] What is there to look at?

NATASHA. Anna — she's dead!

BUBNOFF. That means — she's stopped coughing! [*Goes to Anna's bed, looks, and returns to his bunk*] We must tell Kleshtch — it's his business to know . . .

THE ACTOR. I'll go — I'll say to him — she lost her name — [*Exit*]

NATASHA. [*in centre of room*] I, too — some day — I'll be found in the cellar — dead. . . .

BUBNOFF [*spreading out some rags on his bunk*] What's that? What are you muttering?

NATASHA. Nothing much . . .

BUBNOFF. Waiting for Vaska, eh? Take care — Vassilisa'll break your head!

NATASHA. Isn't it the same who breaks it? I'd much rather he'd do it!

BUBNOFF [*lying down*] Well — that's your own affair . . .

NATASHA. It's best for her to be dead — yet it's a pity . . . oh, Lord — why do we live?

BUBNOFF. It's so with all . . . we're born, live, and die — and I'll die, too — and so'll you — what's there to be gloomy about?

[*Enter Luka, the Tartar, Zob, and Kleshtch. The latter comes after the others, slowly, shrunk up.*]

NATASHA. Sh-sh! Anna!

ZOB. We've heard — God rest her soul . . .

THE TARTAR [*to Kleshtch*] We must take her out of here. Out into the hall! This is no place for corpses — but for the living . . .

KLESHTCH [*quietly*] We'll take her out —

[*Everybody goes to the bed, Kleshtch looks at his wife over the others' shoulders.*]

ZOB [*to the Tartar*] You think she'll smell? I don't

think she will — she dried up while she was still alive . . .

NATASHA. God! If they'd only a little pity . . . if only some one would say a kindly word — oh, you . . .

LUKA. Don't be hurt, girl — never mind! Why and how should we pity the dead? Come, dear! We don't pity the living — we can't even pity our own selves — how can we?

BUBNOFF [*yawning*] And, besides, when you're dead, no word will help you — when you're still alive, even sick, it may. . . .

THE TARTAR [*stepping aside*] The police must be notified . . .

ZOB. The police — must be done! Kleshtch! Did you notify the police?

KLESHTCH. No — she's got to be buried — and all I have is forty kopecks —

ZOB. Well — you'll have to borrow then — otherwise we'll take up a collection . . . one'll give five kopecks, others as much as they can. But the police must be notified at once — or they'll think you killed her or God knows what not . . .

[*Crosses to the Tartar's bunk and prepares to lie down by his side.*]

NATASHA [*going to Bubnoff's bunk*] Now — I'll dream of her . . . I always dream of the dead . . . I'm afraid to go out into the hall by myself — it's dark there . . .

LUKA [*following her*] You better fear the living — I'm telling you . . .

NATASHA. Take me across the hall, grandfather.

LUKA. Come on — come on — I'll take you across —

[*They go away. Pause.*]

ZOB [*to the Tartar*] Oh-ho! Spring will soon be

here, little brother, and it'll be quite warm. In the villages the peasants are already making ready their ploughs and harrows, preparing to till . . . and we . . . Hassan? Snoring already? Damned Mohammedan!

BUBNOFF. Tartars love sleep!

KLESHTCH [*in centre of room, staring in front of him*] What am I to do now?

ZOB. Lie down and sleep — that's all . . .

KLESHTCH [*softly*] But — she . . . how about . . .

[*No one answers him. Satine and the Actor enter.*]

THE ACTOR [*yelling*] Old man! Come here, my trusted Duke of Kent!

SATINE. Miklookha-Maklai is coming — ho-ho!

THE ACTOR. It has been decided upon! Old man, where's the town — where are you?

SATINE. Fata Morgana, the old man bilked you from top to bottom! There's nothing — no towns — no people — nothing at all!

THE ACTOR. You lie!

THE TARTAR [*jumping up*] Where's the boss? I'm going to the boss. If I can't sleep, I won't pay! Corpses — drunkards . . . [*Exit quickly*]

[*Satine looks after him and whistles.*]

BUBNOFF [*in a sleepy voice*] Go to bed, boys — be quiet . . . night is for sleep . . .

THE ACTOR. Yes — so — there's a corpse here. . . . "Our net fished up a corpse. . . ." Verses — by Béranger. . . .

SATINE [*screams*] The dead can't hear . . . the dead do not feel — Scream! — Roar! . . . the deaf don't hear!

[*In the doorway appears Luka.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT THREE.

"The Waste," a yard strewn with rubbish and overgrown with weeds. Back, a high brick wall which shuts out the sight of the sky. Near it are elder bushes. Right, the dark, wooden wall of some sort of house, barn or stable. Left, the grey, tumbledown wall of Kostilyoff's night asylum. It is built at an angle so that the further corner reaches almost to the centre of the yard. Between it and the wall runs a narrow passage. In the grey, plastered wall are two windows, one on a level with the ground, the other about six feet higher up and closer to the brick wall. Near the latter wall is a big sledge turned upside down and a beam about twelve feet long. Right of the wall is a heap of old planks. Evening. The sun is setting, throwing a crimson light on the brick wall. Early spring, the snow having only recently melted. The elder bushes are not yet in bud.

Natasha and Nastya are sitting side by side on the beam. Luka and the Baron are on the sledge. Kleshtch is stretched on the pile of planks to the right. Bubnoff's face is at the ground floor window.

NASTYA [*with closed eyes, nodding her head in rhythm to the tale she is telling in a sing-song voice*] So then at night he came into the garden. I had been waiting for him quite a while. I trembled with fear and grief — he trembled, too . . . he was as white as chalk — and he had the pistol in his hand . . .

NATASHA [*chewing sun-flower seeds*] Oh — are these students really such desperate fellows . . . ?

NASTYA. And he says to me in a dreadful voice: "My precious darling . . ."

BUBNOFF. Ho-ho! Precious — ?

THE BARON. Shut up! If you don't like it, you can lump it! But don't interrupt her. . . . Go on . . .

NASTYA. "My one and only love," he says, "my parents," he says, "refuse to give their consent to our wedding — and threaten to disown me because of my love for you. Therefore," he says, "I must take my life." And his pistol was huge — and loaded with ten bullets . . . "Farewell," he says, "beloved comrade! I have made up my mind for good and all . . . I can't live without you . . ." and I replied: "My unforgettable friend — my Raoul. . . ."

BUBNOFF [*surprised*] What? What? Krawl — did you call him — ?

THE BARON. Nastka! But last time his name was Gaston. . . .

NASTYA [*jumping up*] Shut up, you bastards! Ah — you lousy mongrels! You think for a moment that you can understand love — true love? My love was real honest-to-God love! [*To the Baron*] You good-for-nothing! . . . educated, you call yourself — drinking coffee in bed, did you?

LUKA. Now, now! Wait, people! Don't interfere! Show a little respect to your neighbors . . . it isn't the word that matters, but what's in back of the word. That's what matters! Go on, girl! It's all right!

BUBNOFF. Go on, crow! See if you can make your feathers white!

THE BARON. Well — continue!

NATASHA. Pay no attention to them . . . what are they? They're just jealous . . . they've nothing to tell about themselves . . .

NASTYA [*sits down again*] I'm going to say no more! If they don't believe me they'll laugh. [*Stops suddenly, is silent for a few seconds, then, shutting her eyes, con-*

tinues in a loud and intense voice, swaying her hands as if to the rhythm of far music] And then I replied to him: "Joy of my life! My bright moon! And I, too, I can't live without you — because I love you madly, so madly — and I shall keep on loving you as long as my heart beats in my bosom. But — " I say — "don't take your young life! Think how necessary it is to your dear parents whose only happiness you are. Leave me! Better that I should perish from longing for you, my life! I alone! I — ah — as such, such! Better that I should die — it doesn't matter . . . I am of no use to the world — and I have nothing, nothing at all— " [*Covers her face with her hand and weeps gently*]

NATASHA [*in a low voice*] Don't cry — don't!

[*Luka, smiling, strokes Nastya's head.*]

BUBNOFF [*laughs*] Ah — you limb of Satan!

THE BARON [*also laughs*] Hey, old man? Do you think it's true? It's all from that book "Fatal Love" . . . it's all nonsense! Let her alone!

NATASHA. And what's it to you? Shut up — or God'll punish you!

NASTYA [*bitterly*] God damn your soul! You worthless pig! Soul — bah! — you haven't got one!

LUKA [*takes Nastya's hand*] Come, dear! It's nothing! Don't be angry — I know — I believe you! You're right, not they! If you believe you had a real love affair, then you did — yes! And as for him — don't be angry with a fellow-lodger . . . maybe he's really jealous, and that's why he's laughing. Maybe he never had any real love — maybe not — come on — let's go!

NASTYA [*pressing her hand against her breast*] Grandfather! So help me God — it happened! It happened! He was a student, a Frenchman — Gastotcha was his name — he had a little black beard — and patent leathers — may God strike me dead if I'm lying! And he loved me so — my God, how he loved me!

LUKA. Yes, yes, it's all right. I believe you! Patent

leathers, you said? Well, well, well — and you loved him, did you? [*Disappears with her around the corner*]

THE BARON. God — isn't she a fool, though? She's good-hearted — but such a fool — it's past belief!

BUBNOFF. And why are people so fond of lying — just as if they were up before the judge — really!

NATASHA. I guess lying is more fun than speaking the truth — I, too . . .

THE BARON. What — you, too? Go on!

NATASHA. Oh — I imagine things — invent them — and I wait —

THE BARON. For what?

NATASHA [*smiling confusedly*] Oh — I think that perhaps — well — to-morrow somebody will really appear — some one — oh — out of the ordinary — or something'll happen — also out of the ordinary. . . . I've been waiting for it — oh — always. . . . But, really, what is there to wait for? [*Pause*]

THE BARON [*with a slight smile*] Nothing — I expect nothing! What is past, is past! Through! Over with! And then what?

NATASHA. And then — well — to-morrow I imagine suddenly that I'll die — and I get frightened . . . in summer it's all right to dream of death — then there are thunder storms — one might get struck by lightning . . .

THE BARON. You've a hard life . . . your sister's a wicked-tempered devil!

NATASHA. Tell me — does anybody live happily? It's hard for all of us — I can see that . . .

KLESHTCH [*who until this moment has sat motionless and indifferent, jumps up suddenly*] For all? You lie! Not for all! If it were so — all right! Then it wouldn't hurt — yes!

BUBNOFF. What in hell's bit you? Just listen to him yelping!

[*Kleshtch lies down again and grunts.*]

THE BARON. Well — I'd better go and make my peace with Nastinka — if I don't, she won't treat me to vodka . . .

BUBNOFF. Hm — people love to lie . . . with Nastka — I can see the reason why. She's used to painting that mutt of hers — and now she wants to paint her soul as well . . . put rouge on her soul, eh? But the others — why do they? Take Luka for instance — he lies a lot . . . and what does he get out of it? He's an old fellow, too — why does he do it?

THE BARON [*smiling and walking away*] All people have drab-colored souls — and they like to brighten them up a bit . . .

LUKA [*appearing from round the corner*] You, sir, why do you tease the girl? Leave her alone — let her cry if it amuses her . . . she weeps for her own pleasure — what harm is it to you?

THE BARON. Nonsense, old man! She's a nuisance. Raoul to-day, Gaston to-morrow — always the same old yarn, though! Still — I'll go and make up with her. [*Leaves*]

LUKA. That's right — go — and be nice to her. Being nice to people never does them any harm . . .

NATASHA. You're so good, little father — why are you so good?

LUKA. Good, did you say? Well — call it that! [*Behind the brick wall is heard soft singing and the sounds of a concertina*] Some one has to be kind, girl — some one must pity people! Christ pitied everybody — and he said to us: "Go and do likewise!" I tell you — if you pity a man when he most needs it, good comes of it. Why — I used to be a watchman on the estate of an engineer near Tomsk — all right — the house was right in the middle of a forest — lonely place — winter came — and I remained all by myself. Well — one night I heard a noise —

NATASHA. Thieves?

LUKA. Exactly! Thieves creeping in! I took my gun — I went out. I looked and saw two of them opening a window — and so busy that they didn't even see me. I yell: "Hey there — get out of here!" And they turn on me with their axes — I warn them to stand back, or I'd shoot — and as I speak, I keep on covering them with my gun, first the one, then the other — they go down on their knees, as if to implore me for mercy. And by that time I was furious — because of those axes, you see — and so I say to them: "I was chasing you, you scoundrels — and you didn't go. Now you go and break off some stout branches!" — and they did so — and I say: "Now — one of you lie down and let the other one flog him!" So they obey me and flog each other — and then they begin to implore me again. "Grandfather," they say, "for God's sake give us some bread! We're hungry!" There's thieves for you, my dear! [*Laughs*] And with an ax, too! Yes — honest peasants, both of them! And I say to them, "You should have asked for bread straight away!" And they say: "We got tired of asking — you beg and beg — and nobody gives you a crumb — it hurts!" So they stayed with me all that winter — one of them, Stepan, would take my gun and go shooting in the forest — and the other, Yakoff, was ill most of the time — he coughed a lot . . . and so the three of us together looked after the house . . . then spring came . . . "Good-bye, grandfather," they said — and they went away — back home to Russia . . .

NATASHA. Were they escaped convicts?

LUKA. That's just what they were — escaped convicts — from a Siberian prison camp . . . honest peasants! If I hadn't felt sorry for them — they might have killed me — or maybe worse — and then there would have been trial and prison and afterwards Siberia — what's the sense of it? Prison teaches no good — and Siberia doesn't either — but another human being can

. . . yes, a human being can teach another one kindness — very simply! [*Pause*]

BUBNOFF. Hm — yes — I, for instance, don't know how to lie . . . why — as far as I'm concerned, I believe in coming out with the whole truth and putting it on thick . . . why fuss about it?

KLESHTCH [*again jumps up as if his clothes were on fire, and screams*] What truth? Where is there truth? [*Tearing at his ragged clothes*] Here's truth for you! No work! No strength! That's the only truth! Shelter — there's no shelter! You die — that's the truth! Hell! What do I want with the truth? Let me breathe! Why should I be blamed? What do I want with truth? To live — Christ Almighty! — they won't let you live — and that's another truth!

BUBNOFF. He's mad!

LUKA. Dear Lord . . . listen to me, brother —

KLESHTCH [*trembling with excitement*] They say: there's truth! You, old man, try to console every one . . . I tell you — I hate every one! And there's your truth — God curse it — understand? I tell you — God curse it!

[*Rushes away round the corner, turning as he goes.*]

LUKA. Ah — how excited he got! Where did he run off to?

NATASHA. He's off his head . . .

BUBNOFF. God — didn't he say a whole lot, though? As if he was playing drama — he gets those fits often . . . he isn't used to life yet . . .

PEPEL [*comes slowly round the corner*] Peace on all this honest gathering! Well, Luka, you wily old fellow — still telling them stories?

LUKA. You should have heard how that fellow carried on!

PEPEL. Kleshtch — wasn't it? What's wrong with him? He was running like one possessed!

LUKA. You'd do the same if your own heart were breaking!

PEPEL [*sitting down*] I don't like him . . . he's got such a nasty, bad temper — and so proud! [*Imitating Kleshtch*] "I'm a workman!" And he thinks everyone's beneath him. Go on working if you feel like it — nothing to be so damned haughty about! If work is the standard — a horse can give us points — pulls like hell and says nothing! Natasha — are your folks at home?

NATASHA. They went to the cemetery — then to night service . . .

PEPEL. So that's why you're free for once — quite a novelty!

LUKA [*to Bubnoff, thoughtfully*] There — you say — truth! Truth doesn't always heal a wounded soul. For instance, I knew of a man who believed in a land of righteousness . . .

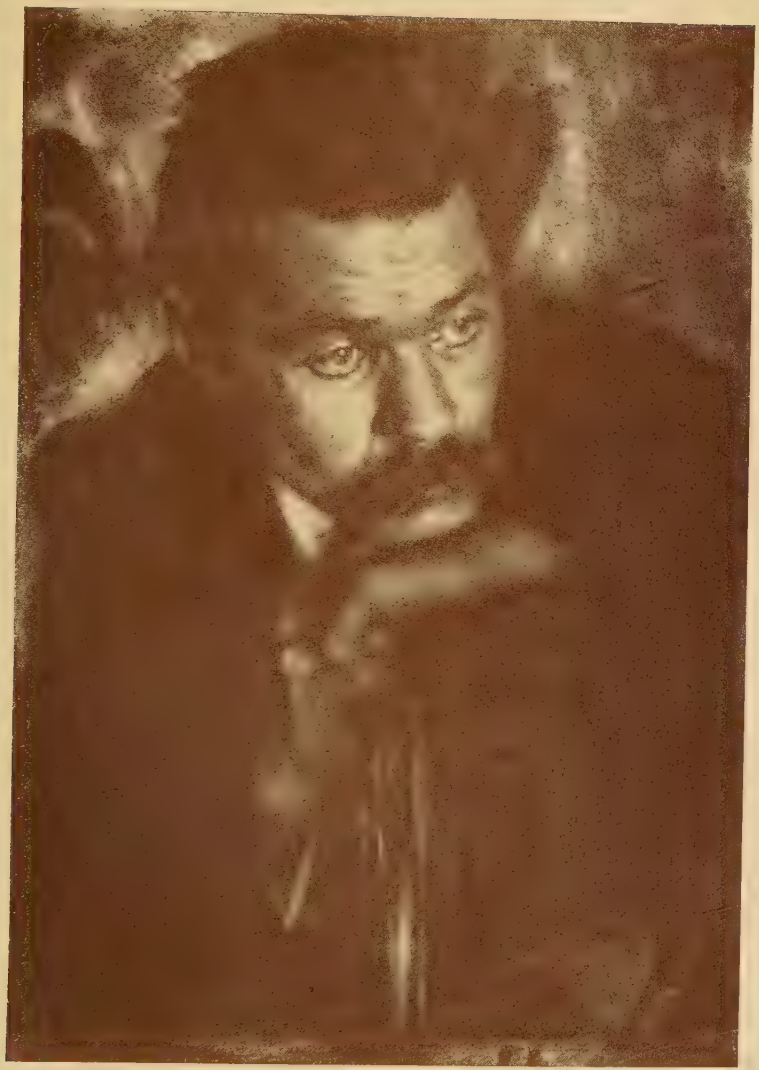
BUBNOFF. In what?

LUKA. In a land of righteousness. He said: "Somewhere on this earth there must be a righteous land — and wonderful people live there — good people! They respect each other, help each other, and everything is peaceful and good!" And so that man — who was always searching for this land of righteousness — he was poor and lived miserably — and when things got to be so bad with him that it seemed there was nothing else for him to do except lie down and die — even then he never lost heart — but he'd just smile and say: "Never mind! I can stand it! A little while longer — and I'll have done with this life — and I'll go in search of the righteous land!" — it was his one happiness — the thought of that land . . .

PEPEL. Well? Did he go there?

BUBNOFF. Where? Ho-ho!

LUKA. And then to this place — in Siberia, by the way — there came a convict — a learned man with books



Sherling, Petrograd

MAXIM GORKY: RUSSIA'S GREATEST LIVING PLAYWRIGHT

and maps — yes, a learned man who knew all sorts of things — and the other man said to him: "Do me a favor — show me where is the land of righteousness and how I can get there." At once the learned man opened his books, spread out his maps, and looked and looked and he said — no — he couldn't find this land anywhere . . . everything was correct — all the lands on earth were marked — but not this land of righteousness . . .

PEPEL [*in a low voice*] Well? Wasn't there a trace of it?

[*Bubnoff roars with laughter.*]

NATASHA. Wait . . . well, little father?

LUKA. The man wouldn't believe it. . . . "It must exist," he said, "look carefully. Otherwise," he says, "your books and maps are of no use if there's no land of righteousness." The learned man was offended. "My plans," he said, "are correct. But there exists no land of righteousness anywhere." Well, then the other man got angry. He'd lived and lived and suffered and suffered, and had believed all the time in the existence of this land — and now, according to the plans, it didn't exist at all. He felt robbed! And he said to the learned man: "Ah — you scum of the earth! You're not a learned man at all — but just a damned cheat!" — and he gave him a good wallop in the eye — then another one . . . [*After a moment's silence*] And then he went home and hanged himself!

[*All are silent. Luka, smiling, looks at Pepel and Natasha.*]

PEPEL [*low-voiced*] To hell with this story — it isn't very cheerful . . .

NATASHA. He couldn't stand the disappointment . . .

BUBNOFF [*sullen*] Ah — it's nothing but a fairy-tale . . .

PEPEL. Well — there is the righteous land for you — doesn't exist, it seems . . .

NATASHA. I'm sorry for that man . . .

BUBNOFF. All a story — ho-ho! — land of righteousness — what an idea! [*Exit through window*]

LUKA [*pointing to window*] He's laughing! [*Pause*] Well, children, God be with you! I'll leave you soon . . .

PEPEL. Where are you going to?

LUKA. To the Ukraine — I heard they discovered a new religion there — I want to see — yes! People are always seeking — they always want something better — God grant them patience!

PEPEL. You think they'll find it?

LUKA. The people? They will find it! He who seeks, will find! He who desires strongly, will find!

NATASHA. If only they could find something better — invent something better . . .

LUKA. They're trying to! But we must help them girl — we must respect them . . .

NATASHA. How can I help them? I am helpless myself!

PEPEL [*determined*] Again — listen — I'll speak to you again, Natasha — here — before him — he knows everything . . . run away with me?

NATASHA. Where? From one prison to another?

PEPEL. I told you — I'm through with being a thief, so help me God! I'll quit! If I say so, I'll do it! I can read and write — I'll work — He's been telling me to go to Siberia on my own hook — let's go there together, what do you say? Do you think I'm not disgusted with my life? Oh — Natasha — I know . . . I see . . . I console myself with the thought that there are lots of people who are honored and respected — and who are bigger thieves than I! But what good is that to me? It isn't that I repent . . . I've no conscience . . . but I do feel one thing: One must live differently. One must live a better life . . . one must be able to respect one's own self . . .

LUKA. That's right, friend! May God help you! It's true! A man must respect himself!

PEPEL. I've been a thief from childhood on. Everybody always called me "Vaska — the thief — the son of a thief!" Oh — very well then — I am a thief — . . . just imagine — now, perhaps, I'm a thief out of spite — perhaps I'm a thief because no one ever called me anything different. . . . Well, Natasha — ?

NATASHA [*sadly*] Somehow I don't believe in words — and I'm restless to-day — my heart is heavy . . . as if I were expecting something . . . it's a pity, Vassily, that you talked to me to-day . . .

PEPEL. When should I? It isn't the first time I speak to you . . .

NATASHA. And why should I go with you? I don't love you so very much — sometimes I like you — and other times the mere sight of you makes me sick . . . it seems — no — I don't really love you . . . when one really loves, one sees no fault. . . . But I do see . . .

PEPEL. Never mind — you'll love me after a while! I'll make you care for me . . . if you'll just say yes! For over a year I've watched you . . . you're a decent girl . . . you're kind — you're reliable — I'm very much in love with you . . .

[*Vassilisa, in her best dress, appears at window and listens.*]

NATASHA. Yes — you love me — but how about my sister . . . ?

PEPEL [*confused*] Well, what of her? There are plenty like her . . .

LUKA. You'll be all right, girl! If there's no bread, you have to eat weeds . . .

PEPEL [*gloomily*] Please — feel a little sorry for me! My life isn't all roses — it's a hell of a life . . . little happiness in it . . . I feel as if a swamp were sucking me under . . . and whatever I try to catch and hold on to, is rotten . . . it breaks . . . Your sister — oh —

I thought she was different . . . if she weren't so greedy after money . . . I'd have done anything for her sake, if she were only all mine . . . but she must have someone else . . . and she has to have money — and freedom . . . because she doesn't like the straight and narrow . . . she can't help me. But you're like a young fir-tree . . . you bend, but you don't break . . .

LUKA. Yes — go with him, girl, go! He's a good lad — he's all right! Only tell him every now and then that he's a good lad so that he won't forget it — and he'll believe you. Just you keep on telling him "Vasya, you're a good man — don't you forget it!" Just think, dear, where else could you go except with him? Your sister is a savage beast . . . and as for her husband, there's little to say of him? He's rotten beyond words . . . and all this life here, where will it get you? But this lad is strong . . .

NATASHA. Nowhere to go — I know — I thought of it. The only thing is — I've no faith in anybody — and there's no place for me to turn to . . .

PEPEL. Yes, there is! But I won't let you go that way — I'd rather cut your throat!

NATASHA [*smiling*] There — I'm not his wife yet — and he talks already of killing me!

PEPEL [*puts his arms around her*] Come, Natasha! Say yes!

NATASHA [*holding him close*] But I'll tell you one thing, Vassily — I swear it before God . . . the first time you strike me or hurt me any other way, I'll have no pity on myself . . . I'll either hang myself . . . or . . .

PEPEL. May my hand wither if ever I touch you!

LUKA. Don't doubt him, dear! He needs you more than you need him!

VASSILISA [*from the window*] So now they're engaged! Love and advice!

NATASHA. They've come back — oh, God — they saw — oh, Vassily . . .

PEPEL. Why are you frightened? Nobody'll dare touch you now!

VASSILISA. Don't be afraid, Natalia! He won't beat you . . . he don't know how to love or how to beat . . . I know!

LUKA [*in a low voice*] Rotten old hag — like a snake in the grass . . .

VASSILISA. He dares only with the word!

KOSTILYOFF [*enters*] Natashka! What are you doing here, you parasite? Gossiping? Kicking about your family? And the samovar not ready? And the table not cleared?

NATASHA [*going out*] I thought you were going to church . . . ?

KOSTILYOFF. None of your business what we intended doing! Mind your own affairs — and do what you're told!

PEPEL. Shut up, you! She's no longer your servant! Don't go, Natalia — don't do a thing!

NATASHA. Stop ordering me about — you're commencing too soon! [*Leaves*]

PEPEL [*to Kostilyoff*] That's enough. You've used her long enough — now she's mine!

KOSTILYOFF. Yours? When did you buy her — and for how much?

[*Vassilisa roars with laughter.*]

LUKA. Go away, Vasya!

PEPEL. Don't laugh, you fools — or first thing you know I'll make you cry!

VASSILISA. Oh, how terrible! Oh — how you frighten me!

LUKA. Vassily — go away! Don't you see — she's goading you on . . . ridiculing you, don't you understand . . . ?

PEPEL. Yes . . . You lie, lie! You won't get what you want!

VASSILISA. Nor will I get what I don't want, Vasya!

PEPEL [*shaking his fist at her*] We'll see . . . [*Exit*]

VASSILISA [*disappearing through window*] I'll arrange some wedding for you . . .

KOSTILYOFF [*crossing to Luka*] Well, old man, how's everything?

LUKA. All right!

KOSTILYOFF. You're going away, they say — ?

LUKA. Soon.

KOSTILYOFF. Where to?

LUKA. I'll follow my nose . . .

KOSTILYOFF. Tramping, eh? Don't like stopping in one place all the time, do you?

LUKA. Even water won't pass beneath a stone that's sunk too firmly in the ground, they say . . .

KOSTILYOFF. That's true for a stone. But man must settle in one place. Men can't live like cockroaches, crawling about wherever they want. . . . A man must stick to one place — and not wander about aimlessly . . .

LUKA. But suppose his home is wherever he hangs his hat?

KOSTILYOFF. Why, then — he's a vagabond, — useless . . . a human being must be of some sort of use — he must work . . .

LUKA. That's what you think, eh?

KOSTILYOFF. Yes — sure . . . just look! What's a vagabond? A strange fellow . . . unlike all others. If he's a real pilgrim then he's some good in the world . . . perhaps he discovered a new truth. Well — but not every truth is worth while. Let him keep it to himself and shut up about it! Or else — let him speak in a way which no one can understand . . . don't let him interfere . . . don't let him stir up people without cause! It's none of his business how other people live! Let him follow his own righteous path . . . in the woods — or

in a monastery — away from everybody! He mustn't interfere — nor condemn other people — but pray — pray for all of us — for all the world's sins — for mine — for yours — for everybody's. To pray — that's why he forsakes the world's turmoil! That's so! [*Pause*] But you — what sort of a pilgrim are you — ? An honest person must have a passport . . . all honest people have passports . . . yes . . . !

LUKA. In this world there are people — and also just plain men . . .

KOSTILYOFF. Don't coin wise sayings! Don't give me riddles! I'm as clever as you . . . what's the difference — people and men?

LUKA. What riddle is there? I say — there's sterile and there's fertile ground . . . whatever you sow in it, grows . . . that's all . . .

KOSTILYOFF. What do you mean?

LUKA. Take yourself for instance . . . if the Lord God himself said to you: "Mikhailo, be a man!" — it would be useless — nothing would come of it — you're doomed to remain just as you are . . .

KOSTILYOFF. Oh — but do you realize that my wife's uncle is a policeman, and that if I . . .

VASSILISA [*coming in*] Mikhail Ivanitch — come and have your tea . . .

KOSTILYOFF [*to Luka*] You listen! Get out! You leave this place — hear?

VASSILISA. Yes — get out, old man! Your tongue's too long! And — who knows — you may be an escaped convict . . .

KOSTILYOFF. If I ever see sign of you again after to-day — well — I've warned you!

LUKA. You'll call your uncle, eh? Go on — call him! Tell him you've caught an escaped convict — and maybe uncle'll get a reward — perhaps all of three kopecks . . .

BUBNOFF [*in the window*] What are you bargaining about? Three kopecks — for what?

LUKA. They're threatening to sell me . . .

VASSILISA [*to her husband*] Come . . .

BUBNOFF. For three kopecks? Well — look out, old man — they may even do it for one!

KOSTILYOFF [*to Bubnoff*] You have a habit of jumping up like a jack-in-the-box!

VASSILISA. The world is full of shady people and crooks —

LUKA. Hope you'll enjoy your tea!

VASSILISA [*turning*] Shut up! You rotten toadstool! [*Leaves with her husband.*]

LUKA. I'm off to-night.

BUBNOFF. That's right. Don't outstay your welcome!

LUKA. True enough.

BUBNOFF. I know. Perhaps I've escaped the gallows by getting away in time . . .

LUKA. Well?

BUBNOFF. That's true. It was this way. My wife took up with my boss. He was great at his trade — could dye a dog's skin so that it looked like a raccoon's — could change cat's skin into kangaroo — muskrats, all sorts of things. Well — my wife took up with him — and they were so mad about each other that I got afraid they might poison me or something like that — so I commenced beating up my wife — and the boss beat me . . . we fought savagely! Once he tore off half my whiskers — and broke one of my ribs . . . well, then I, too, got enraged. . . . I cracked my wife over the head with an iron yard-measure — well — and altogether it was like an honest-to-God war! And then I saw that nothing really could come of it . . . they were planning to get the best of me! So I started planning — how to kill my wife — I thought of it a whole lot . . . but I thought better of it just in time . . . and got away . . .

LUKA. That was best! Let them go on changing dogs into raccoons!

BUBNOFF. Only — the shop was in my wife's name . . . and so I did myself out of it, you see? Although, to tell the truth, I would have drunk it away . . . I'm a hard drinker, you know . . .

LUKA. A hard drinker — oh . . .

BUBNOFF. The worst you ever met! Once I start drinking, I drink everything in sight, I'll spend every bit of money I have — everything except my bones and my skin . . . what's more, I'm lazy . . . it's terrible how I hate work!

[*Enter Satine and the Actor, quarreling.*]

SATINE. Nonsense! You'll go nowhere — it's all a damned lie! Old man, what did you stuff him with all those fairy-tales for?

THE ACTOR. You lie! Grandfather! Tell him that he lies! — I am going away. I worked to-day — I swept the streets . . . and I didn't have a drop of vodka. What do you think of that? Here they are — two fifteen kopeck pieces — and I'm sober!

SATINE. Why — that's absurd! Give it to me — I'll either drink it up — or lose it at cards . . .

THE ACTOR. Get out — this is for my journey . . .

LUKA [*to Satine*] And you — why are you trying to lead him astray?

SATINE. Tell me, soothsayer, beloved by the Gods, what's my future going to be? I've gone to pieces, brother — but everything isn't lost yet, grandfather . . . there are sharks in this world who got more brains than I!

LUKA. You're cheerful, Constantine — and very agreeable!

BUBNOFF. Actor, come over here! [*The Actor crosses to window, sits down on the sill before Bubnoff, and speaks in a low voice with him*]

SATINE. You know, brother, I used to be a clever

youngster. It's nice to think of it. I was a devil of a fellow . . . danced splendidly, played on the stage, loved to amuse people . . . it was awfully gay . . .

LUKA. How did you get to be what you are?

SATINE. You're inquisitive, old man! You want to know everything? What for?

LUKA. I want to understand the ways of men — I look at you, and I don't understand. You're a bold lad, Constantine, and you're no fool . . . yet, all of a sudden . . .

SATINE. It's prison, grandfather — I spent four years and seven months in prison . . . afterwards — where could I go?

LUKA. Aha! What were you there for?

SATINE. On account of a scoundrel — whom I killed in a fit of rage . . . and despair . . . and in prison I learned to play cards . . .

LUKA. You killed — because of a woman?

SATINE. Because of my own sister. . . . But look here — leave me alone! I don't care for these cross-examinations — and all this happened a long time ago. It's already nine years since my sister's death. . . . Brother, she was a wonderful girl . . .

LUKA. You take life easily! And only a while ago that locksmith was here — and how he did yell!

SATINE. Kleshtch?

LUKA. Yes — "There's no work," he shouted; "there isn't anything . . ."

SATINE. He'll get used to it. What could I do?

LUKA [*softly*] Look — here he comes!

[*Kleshtch walks in slowly, his head bowed low.*]

SATINE. Hey, widower! Why are you so down in the mouth? What are you thinking?

KLESHTCH. I'm thinking — what'll I do? I've no food — nothing — the funeral ate up all . . .

SATINE. I'll give you a bit of advice . . . do nothing! Just be a burden to the world at large!

KLESHTCH. Go on — talk — I'd be ashamed of myself . . .

SATINE. Why — people aren't ashamed to let you live worse than a dog. Just think . . . you stop work — so do I — so do hundreds, thousands of others — everybody — understand? — everybody'll quit working . . . nobody'll do a damned thing — and then what'll happen?

KLESHTCH. They'll all starve to death . . .

LUKA [*to Satine*] If those are your notions, you ought to join the order of Begunes — you know — there's some such organization . . .

SATINE. I know — grandfather — and they're no fools . . .

[*Natasha is heard screaming behind Kostilyoff's window: "What for? Stop! What have I done?"*]

LUKA [*worried*] Natasha! That was she crying — oh, God . . .

[*From Kostilyoff's room is heard noise, shuffling, breaking of crockery, and Kostilyoff's shrill cry: "Ah! Heretic! Bitch!"*]

VASSILISA. Wait, wait — I'll teach her — there, there!

NATASHA. They're beating me — killing me . . .

SATINE [*shouts through the window*] Hey — you there — . . .

LUKA [*trembling*] Where's Vassily — ? Call Vaska — oh, God — listen, brothers . . .

THE ACTOR [*running out*] I'll find him at once!

BUBNOFF. They beat her a lot these days . . .

SATINE. Come on, old man — we'll be witnesses . . .

LUKA [*following Satine*] Oh — witnesses — what for? Vassily — he should be called at once!

NATASHA. Sister — sister dear! Va-a-a . . .

BUBNOFF. They've gagged her — I'll go and see . . .

[*The noise in Kostilyoff's room dies down gradually as if they had gone into the hallway. The old man's cry:*

"Stop!" is heard. A door is slammed noisily, and the latter sound cuts off all the other noises sharply. Quiet on the stage. Twilight.]

KLESHTCH [*seated on the sledge, indifferently, rubbing his hands; mutters at first indistinguishably, then:*] What then? One must live. [*Louder*] Must have shelter — well? There's no shelter, no roof — nothing . . . there's only man — man alone — no hope . . . no help . . .

[*Exit slowly, his head bent. A few moments of ominous silence, then somewhere in the hallway a mass of sounds, which grows in volume and comes nearer. Individual voices are heard.*]

VASSILISA. I'm her sister — let go . . .

KOSTILYOFF. What right have you . . . ?

VASSILISA. Jail-bird!

SATINE. Call Vaska — quickly! Zob — hit him!

[*A police whistle. The Tartar runs in, his right hand in a sling.*]

THE TARTAR. There's a new law for you — kill only in daytime!

[*Enter Zob, followed by Miedviedieff.*]

ZOB. I handed him a good one!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. You — how dare you fight?

THE TARTAR. What about yourself? What's your duty?

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*running after*] Stop — give back my whistle!

KOSTILYOFF [*runs in*] Abram! Stop him! Hold him! He's a murderer — he . . .

[*Enter Kvashnya and Nastya supporting Natasha who is disheveled. Satine backs away, pushing away Vassilisa who is trying to attack her sister, while, near her, Alyoshka jumps up and down like a madman, whistles into her ear, shrieking, roaring. Also other ragged men and women.*]

SATINE [*to Vassilisa*] Well — you damned bitch!

VASSILISA. Let go, you jail-bird! I'll tear you to pieces — if I have to pay for it with my own life!

KVASHNYA [*leading Natasha aside*] You — Karpovna — that's enough — stand back — aren't you ashamed? Or are you crazy?

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*seizes Satine*] Aha — caught at last!

SATINE. Zob — beat them up! Vaska — Vaska . . .

[*They all, in a chaotic mass, struggle near the brick wall. They lead Natasha to the right, and set her on a pile of wood. Pepel rushes in from the hallway and, silently, with powerful movements, pushes the crowd aside.*]

PEPEL. Natalia, where are you . . . you . . .

KOSTILYOFF [*disappearing behind a corner*] Abram! Seize Vaska! Comrades — help us get him! The thief! The robber!

PEPEL. You — you old bastard! [*Aiming a terrific blow at Kostilyoff. Kostilyoff falls so that only the upper part of his body is seen. Pepel rushes to Natasha*]

VASSILISA. Beat Vaska! Brothers! Beat the thief!

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*yells to Satine*] Keep out of this — it's a family affair . . . they're relatives — and who are you . . .

PEPEL [*to Natasha*] What did she do to you? She used a knife?

KVASHNYA. God — what beasts! They've scalded the child's feet with boiling water!

NASTYA. They overturned the samovar . . .

THE TARTAR. Maybe an accident — you must make sure — you can't exactly tell . . .

NATASHA [*half fainting*] Vassily — take me away —

VASSILISA. Good people! Come! Look! He's dead! Murdered!

[*All crowd into the hallway near Kostilyoff. Bubnoff leaves the crowd and crosses to Pepel.*]

BUBNOFF [*in a low voice, to Pepel*] Vaska — the old man is done for!

PEPEL [*looks at him, as though he does not understand*] Go — for help — she must be taken to the hospital . . . I'll settle with them . . .

BUBNOFF. I say — the old man — somebody's killed him . . .

[*The noise on the stage dies out like a fire under water. Distinct, whispered exclamations: "Not really?" "Well — let's go away, brothers!" "The devil!" "Hold on now!" "Let's get away before the police comes!" The crowd disappears. Bubnoff, the Tartar, Nastya, and Kvashnya, rush up to Kostilyoff's body.*]

VASSILISA [*rises and cries out triumphantly*] Killed — my husband's killed! Vaska killed him! I saw him! Brothers, I saw him! Well — Vasya — the police!

PEPEL [*moves away from Natasha*] Let me alone. [*Looks at Kostilyoff; to Vassilisa*] Well — are you glad? [*Touches the corpse with his foot*] The old bastard is dead! Your wish has been granted! Why not do the same to you? [*Throws himself at her*]

[*Satine and Zob quickly overpower him, and Vassilisa disappears in the passage.*]

SATINE. Come to your senses!

ZOB. Hold on! Not so fast!

VASSILISA [*appearing*] Well, Vaska, dear friend? You can't escape your fate. . . . police — Abram — whistle!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Those devils tore my whistle off!

ALYOSHKA. Here it is! [*Whistles, Miedviedieff runs after him*]

SATINE [*leading Pepel to Natasha*] Don't be afraid, Vaska! Killed in a row! That's nonsense — only manslaughter — you won't have to serve a long term . . .

VASSILISA. Hold Vaska — he killed him — I saw it!

SATINE. I, too, gave the old man a couple of blows — he was easily fixed . . . you call me as witness, Vaska!

PEPEL. I don't need to defend myself . . . I want to drag Vassilisa into this mess — and I'll do it — she

was the one who wanted it . . . she was the one who urged me to kill him — she goaded me on . . .

NATASHA [*sudden and loud*] Oh — I understand — so that's it, Vassily? Good people! They're both guilty — my sister and he — they're both guilty! They had it all planned! So, Vassily, that's why you spoke to me a while ago — so that she should overhear everything — ? Good people! She's his mistress — you know it — everybody knows it — they're both guilty! She — she urged him to kill her husband — he was in their way — and so was I! And now they've maimed me . . .

PEPEL. Natalia! What's the matter with you? What are you saying?

SATINE. Oh — hell!

VASSILISA. You lie. She lies. He — Vaska killed him . . .

NATASHA. They're both guilty! God damn you both!

SATINE. What a mix-up! Hold on, Vassily — or they'll ruin you between them!

ZOB. I can't understand it — oh — what a mess!

PEPEL. Natalia! It can't be true! Surely you don't believe that I — with her —

SATINE. So help me God, Natasha! Just think . . .

VASSILISA [*in the passage*] They've killed my husband — Your Excellency! Vaska Pepel, the thief, killed him, Captain! I saw it — everybody saw it . . .

NATASHA [*tossing about in agony; her mind wandering*] Good people — my sister and Vaska killed him! The police — listen — this sister of mine — here — she urged, coaxed her lover — there he stands — the scoundrel! They both killed him! Put them in jail! Bring them before the judge! Take me along, too! To prison! Christ Almighty — take me to prison, too!

CURTAIN.

ACT FOUR.

Same as Act I. But Pepel's room is no longer there, and the partition has been removed. Furthermore, there is no anvil at the place where Kleshtch used to sit and work. In the corner, where Pepel's room used to be, the Tartar lies stretched out, rather restless, and groaning from time to time. Kleshtch sits at one end of the table, repairing a concertina and now and then testing the stops. At the other end of the table sit Satine, the Baron, and Nastya. In front of them stand a bottle of vodka, three bottles of beer, and a large loaf of black bread. The Actor lies on top of the stove, shifting about and coughing. It is night. The stage is lit by a lamp in the middle of the table. Outside the wind howls.

KLESHTCH. Yes . . . he disappeared during the confusion and noise . . .

THE BARON. He vanished under the very eyes of the police — just like a puff of smoke . . .

SATINE. That's how sinners flee from the company of the righteous!

NASTYA. He was a dear old soul! But you — you aren't men — you're just — oh — like rust on iron!

THE BARON [*drinks*] Here's to you, my lady!

SATINE. He was an inquisitive old fellow — yes! Nastenka here fell in love with him . . .

NASTYA. Yes! I did! Madly! It's true! He saw everything — understood everything . . .

SATINE [*laughing*] Yes, generally speaking, I would say that he was — oh — like mush to those who can't chew. . . .

THE BARON [*laughing*] Right! Like plaster on a boil!

KLESHTCH. He was merciful — you people don't know what pity means . . .

SATINE. What good can I do you by pitying you?

KLESHTCH. You needn't have pity — but you needn't harm or offend your fellow-beings, either!

THE TARTAR [*sits up on his bunk, nursing his wounded hand carefully*] He was a fine old man. The law of life was the law of his heart. . . . and he who obeys this law, is good, while he who disregards it, perishes . . .

THE BARON. What law, Prince?

THE TARTAR. There are a number — different ones — you know . . .

THE BARON. Proceed!

THE TARTAR. Do not do harm unto others — such is the law!

SATINE. Oh — you mean the Penal Code, criminal and correctional, eh?

THE BARON. And also the Code of Penalties inflicted by Justices of the Peace!

THE TARTAR. No. I mean the Koran. It is the supreme law — and your own soul ought to be the Koran — yes!

KLESHTCH [*testing his concertina*] It wheezes like all hell! But the Prince speaks the truth — one must live abiding by the law — by the teachings of the Gospels . . .

SATINE. Well — go ahead and do it!

THE BARON. Just try it!

THE TARTAR. The Prophet Mohammed gave to us the law. He said: "Here is the law! Do as it is written therein!" Later on a time will arrive when the Koran will have outlived its purpose — and time will bring forth its own laws — every generation will create its own . . .

SATINE. To be sure! Time passed on — and gave

us — the Criminal Code . . . It's a strong law, brother — it won't wear off so very soon!

NASTYA [*banging her glass on the table*] Why — why do I stay here — with you? I'll go away somewhere — to the ends of the world!

THE BARON. Without any shoes, my lady?

NASTYA. I'll go — naked, if must be — creeping on all fours!

THE BARON. That'll be rather picturesque, my lady — on all fours!

NASTYA. Yes — and I'll crawl if I have to — anything at all — as long as I don't have to see your faces any longer — oh, I'm so sick of it all — the life — the people — everything!

SATINE. When you go, please take the actor along — he's preparing to go to the very same place — he has learned that within a half mile's distance of the end of the world there's a hospital for diseased organons . . .

THE ACTOR [*raising his head over the top of the stove*] A hospital for organisms — you fool!

SATINE. For organons — poisoned with vodka!

THE ACTOR. Yes! He will go! He will indeed! You'll see!

THE BARON. Who is he, sir?

THE ACTOR. I!

THE BARON. Thanks, servant of the goddess — what's her name — ? The goddess of drama — tragedy — whatever is her name — ?

THE ACTOR. The muse, idiot! Not the goddess — the muse!

SATINE. Lachesis — Hera — Aphrodite — Atropos — oh! To hell with them all! You see — Baron — it was the old man who stuffed the actor's head full with this rot . . .

THE BARON. That old man's a fool . . .

THE ACTOR. Ignoramuses! Beasts! Melpomene — that's her name! Heartless brutes! Bastards! You'll

see! He'll go! "On with the orgy, dismal spirits!" — poem — ah — by Béranger! Yes — he'll find some spot where there's no — no . . .

THE BARON. Where there's nothing, sir?

THE ACTOR. Right! Nothing! "This hole shall be my grave — I am dying — ill and exhausted . . ." Why do you exist? Why?

THE BARON. You! God or genius or orgy — or whatever you are — don't roar so loud!

THE ACTOR. You lie! I'll roar all I want to!

NASTYA [*lifting her head from the table and throwing up her hands*] Go on! Yell! Let them listen to you!

THE BARON. Where is the sense, my lady?

SATINE. Leave them alone, Baron! To hell with the lot! Let them yell — let them knock their damned heads off if they feel like it! There's a method in their madness! Don't you go and interfere with people as that old fellow did! Yes — it's he — the damned old fool — he bewitched the whole gang of us!

KLESHTCH. He persuaded them to go away — but failed to show them the road . . .

THE BARON. That old man was a humbug!

NASTYA. Liar! You're a humbug yourself!

THE BARON. Shut up, my lady!

KLESHTCH. The old man didn't like truth very much — as a matter of fact he strongly resented it — and wasn't he right, though? Just look — where is there any truth? And yet, without it, you can't breathe! For instance, our Tartar Prince over there, crushed his hand at his work — and now he'll have to have his arm amputated — and there's the truth for you!

SATINE [*striking the table with his clenched fist*] Shut up! You sons of bitches! Fools! Not another word about that old fellow! [*To the Baron*] You, Baron, are the worst of the lot! You don't understand a thing, and you lie like the devil! The old man's no humbug! What's the truth? Man! Man — that's the truth! He

understood man — you don't! You're all as dumb as stones! I understand the old man — yes! He lied — but lied out of sheer pity for you . . . God damn you! Lots of people lie out of pity for their fellow-beings! I know! I've read about it! They lie — oh — beautifully, inspiringly, stirringly! Some lies bring comfort, and others bring peace — a lie alone can justify the burden which crushed a workman's hand and condemns those who are starving! I know what lying means! The weakling and the one who is a parasite through his very weakness — they both need lies — lies are their support, their shield, their armor! But the man who is strong, who is his own master, who is free and does not have to suck his neighbors' blood — he needs no lies! To lie — it's the creed of slaves and masters of slaves! Truth is the religion of the free man!

THE BARON. Bravo! Well spoken! Hear, hear! I agree! You speak like an honest man!

SATINE. And why can't a crook at times speak the truth — since honest people at times speak like crooks? Yes — I've forgotten a lot — but I still know a thing or two! The old man? Oh — he's wise! He affected me as acid affects a dirty old silver coin! Let's drink to his health! Fill the glasses . . . [*Nastya fills a glass with beer and hands it to Satine, who laughs*] The old man lives within himself . . . he looks upon all the world from his own angle. Once I asked him: "Granddad, why do people live?" [*Tries to imitate Luka's voice and gestures*] And he replied: "Why, my dear fellow, people live in the hope of something better! For example — let's say there are carpenters in this world, and all sorts of trash . . . people . . . and they give birth to a carpenter the like of which has never been seen upon the face of the earth . . . he's way above everybody else, and has no equal among carpenters! The brilliancy of his personality was reflected on all his trade, on all the other carpenters, so that they advanced twenty years

in one day! This applies to all other trades — blacksmiths and shoemakers and other workmen — and all the peasants — and even the aristocrats live in the hopes of a higher life! Each individual thinks that he's living for his own Self, but in reality he lives in the hope of something better. A hundred years — sometimes longer — do we expect, live for the finer, higher life . . ." [*Nastya stares intently into Satine's face. Kleshtch stops working and listens. The Baron bows his head very low, drumming softly on the table with his fingers. The Actor, peering down from the stove, tries to climb noiselessly into the bunk*] "Every one, brothers, every one lives in the hope of something better. That's why we must respect each and every human being! How do we know who he is, why he was born, and what he is capable of accomplishing? Perhaps his coming into the world will prove to be our good fortune . . . Especially must we respect little children! Children — need freedom! Don't interfere with their lives! Respect children!" [*Pause*]

THE BARON [*thoughtfully*] Hm — yes — something better? — That reminds me of my family . . . an old family dating back to the time of Catherine . . . all noblemen, soldiers, originally French . . . they served their country and gradually rose higher and higher. In the days of Nicholas the First my grandfather, Gustave DeBille, held a high post — riches — hundreds of serfs . . . horses — cooks —

NASTYA. You liar! It isn't true!

THE BARON [*jumping up*] What? Well — go on —

NASTYA. It isn't true.

THE BARON [*screams*] A house in Moscow! A house in Petersburg! Carriages! Carriages with coats of arms!

[*Kleshtch takes his concertina and goes to one side, watching the scene with interest.*]

NASTYA. You lie!

THE BARON. Shut up! — I say — dozens of footmen . . .

NASTYA [*delighted*] You lie!

THE BARON. I'll kill you!

NASTYA [*ready to run away*] There were no carriages!

SATINE. Stop, Nastenka! Don't infuriate him!

THE BARON. Wait — you bitch! My grandfather . . .

NASTYA. There was no grandfather! There was nothing!

[*Satine roars with laughter.*]

THE BARON [*worn out with rage, sits down on bench*] Satine! Tell that slut — what — ? You, too, are laughing? You — don't believe me either? [*Cries out in despair, pounding the table with his fists*] It's true — damn the whole lot of you!

NASTYA [*triumphantly*] So — you're crying? Understand now what a human being feels like when nobody believes him?

KLESHTCH [*returning to the table*] I thought there'd be a fight . . .

THE TARTAR. Oh — people are fools! It's too bad . . .

THE BARON. I shall not permit any one to ridicule me! I have proofs — documents — damn you!

SATINE. Forget it! Forget about your grandfather's carriages! You can't drive anywhere in a carriage of the past!

THE BARON. How dare she — just the same — ?

NASTYA. Just imagine! How dare I — ?

SATINE. You see — she does dare! How is she any worse than you are? Although, surely, in her past there wasn't even a father and mother, let alone carriages and a grandfather . . .

THE BARON [*quieting down*] Devil take you — you do know how to argue dispassionately — and I, it seems — I've no will-power . . .

SATINE. Acquire some — it's useful . . . [*Pause*] Nastya! Are you going to the hospital?

NASTYA. What for?

SATINE. To see Natashka.

NASTYA. Oh — just woke up, did you? She's been out of the hospital for some time — and they can't find a trace of her . . .

SATINE. Oh — that woman's a goner!

KLESHTCH. It's interesting to see whether Vaska will get the best of Vassilisa, or the other way around — ?

NASTYA. Vassilisa will win out! She's shrewd! And Vaska will go to the gallows!

SATINE. For manslaughter? No — only to jail . . .

NASTYA. Too bad — the gallows would have been better . . . that's where all of you should be sent . . . swept off into a hole — like filth . . .

SATINE [*astonished*] What's the matter? Are you crazy?

THE BARON. Oh — give her a wallop — that'll teach her to be less impertinent . . .

NASTYA. Just you try to touch me!

THE BARON. I shall!

SATINE. Stop! Don't insult her! I can't get the thought of the old man out of my head! [*Roars with laughter*] Don't offend your fellow-beings! Suppose I were offended once in such a way that I'd remember it for the rest of my life? What then? Should I forgive? No, no!

THE BARON [*to Nastya*] You must understand that I'm not your sort . . . you — ah — you piece of dirt!

NASTYA. You bastard! Why — you live off me like a worm off an apple!

[*The men laugh amusedly.*]

KLESHTCH. Fool! An apple — ?

THE BARON. You can't be angry with her — she's just an ass —

NASTYA. You laugh! Liars? Don't strike you as funny, eh?

THE ACTOR [*morosely*] Give them a good beating!

NASTYA. If I only could! [*Takes a cup from the table and throws it on the floor*] That's what I'd like to do to you all!

THE TARTAR. Why break dishes — eh — silly girl?

THE BARON [*rising*] That'll do! I'll teach her manners in half a second!

NASTYA [*running toward door*] Go to hell!

SATINE [*calling after her*] Hey! That's enough! Whom are you trying to frighten? What's all the row about, anyway?

NASTYA. Dogs! I hope you'll croak! Dogs! [*Runs out*]

THE ACTOR [*morosely*] Amen!

THE TARTAR. Allah! Mad women, these Russians! They're bold, wilful; Tartar women aren't like that! They know the law and abide by it. . . .

KLESHTCH. She ought to be given a sound hiding!

THE BARON. The slut!

KLESHTCH [*testing the concertina*] It's ready! But its owner isn't here yet — that young fellow is burning his life away . . .

SATINE. Care for a drink — now?

KLESHTCH. Thanks . . . it's time to go to bed . . .

SATINE. Getting used to us?

KLESHTCH [*drinks, then goes to his bunk*] It's all right . . . there are people everywhere — at first you don't notice it . . . but after a while you don't mind. . . .

[*The Tartar spreads some rags over his bunk, then kneels on them and prays.*]

THE BARON [*to Satine, pointing at the Tartar*] Look!

SATINE. Stop! He's a good fellow! Leave him alone! [*Roars with laughter*] I feel kindly to-day — the devil alone knows the reason why . . .

THE BARON. You always feel kindly when you're drunk — you're even wiser at such times . . .

SATINE. When I'm drunk? Yes — then I like every-

thing — right — He prays? That's fine! A man may believe or not — that's his own affair — a man is free — he pays for everything himself — belief or unbelief — love — wisdom . . . a man pays for everything — and that's just why he's free! Man is — truth! And what is man? It's neither you nor I nor they — oh, no — it's you and they and I and the old man — and Napoleon — Mohammed — all in one! [*Outlines vaguely in the air the contour of a human being*] Do you understand? It's tremendous! It contains the beginning and the end of everything — everything is in man — and everything exists for him! Man alone exists — everything else is the creation of his hands and his brain! Man! It is glorious! It sounds — oh — so big! Man must be respected — not degraded with pity — but respected, respected! Let us drink to man, Baron! [*Rises*] It is good to feel that you are a man! I'm a convict, a murderer, a crook — granted! — When I'm out on the street people stare at me as if I were a scoundrel — they draw away from me — they look after me and often they say: "You dog! You humbug! Work!" Work? And what for? to fill my belly? [*Roars with laughter*] I've always despised people who worry too much about their bellies. It isn't right, Baron! It isn't! Man is loftier than that! Man stands above hunger!

THE BARON. You — reason things out. . . . Well and good — it brings you a certain amount of consolation. . . . Personally I'm incapable of it . . . I don't know how. [*Glances around him and then, softly, guardedly*] Brother — I am afraid — at times. Do you understand? Afraid! — Because — what next?

SATINE. Rot! What's a man to be afraid of?

THE BARON [*pacing up and down*] You know — as far back as I can remember, there's been a sort of fog in my brain. I was never able to understand anything. Somehow I feel embarrassed — it seems to me that all my life I've done nothing but change clothes — and why?

I don't understand! I studied — I wore the uniform of the Institute for the Sons of the Nobility . . . but what have I learned? I don't remember! I married — I wore a frock-coat — then a dressing-gown . . . but I chose a disagreeable wife . . . and why? I don't understand. I squandered everything that I possessed — I wore some sort of a grey jacket and brick-colored trousers — but how did I happen to ruin myself? I haven't the slightest idea. . . . I had a position in the Department of State. . . . I wore a uniform and a cap with insignia of rank. . . . I embezzled government funds . . . so they dressed me in a convict's garb — and later on I got into these clothes here — and it all happened as in a dream — it's funny . . .

SATINE. Not very! It's rather — silly!

THE BARON. Yes — silly! I think so, too. Still — wasn't I born for some sort of purpose?

SATINE [*laughing*] Probably — a man is born to conceive a better man. [*Shaking his head*] — It's all right!

THE BARON. That she-devil Nastka! Where did she run to? I'll go and see — after all, she . . . [*Exit; pause*]

THE ACTOR. Tartar! [*Pause*] Prince! [*The Tartar looks round*] Say a prayer for me . . .

THE TARTAR. What?

THE ACTOR [*softly*] Pray — for me!

THE TARTAR [*after a silence*] Pray for your own self!

THE ACTOR [*quickly crawls off the stove and goes to the table, pours out a drink with shaking hands, drinks, then almost runs to passage*] All over!

SATINE. Hey, proud Sicambrian! Where are you going?

[*Satine whistles. Miedviedieff enters, dressed in a woman's flannel shirt-waist; followed by Bubnoff. Both are slightly drunk. Bubnoff carries a bunch of pretzels in one hand, a couple of smoked fish in the other, a bottle of vodka under one arm, another bottle in his coat pocket.*]

MIEDVIEDIEFF. A camel is something like a donkey — only it has no ears. . . .

BUBNOFF. Shut up! You're a variety of donkey yourself!

MIEDVIEDIEFF. A camel has no ears at all, at all — it hears through its nostrils . . .

BUBNOFF [*to Satine*] Friend! I've looked for you in all the saloons and all the cabarets! Take this bottle — my hands are full . . .

SATINE. Put the pretzels on the table — then you'll have one hand free —

BUBNOFF. Right! Hey — you donkey — look! Isn't he a clever fellow?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. All crooks are clever — I know! They couldn't do a thing without brains. An honest man is all right even if he's an idiot . . . but a crook must have brains. But, speaking about camels, you're wrong . . . you can ride them — they have no horns . . . and no teeth either . . .

BUBNOFF. Where's everybody? Why is there no one here? Come on out . . . I treat! Who's in the corner?

SATINE. How soon will you drink up everything you have? Scarecrow!

BUBNOFF. Very soon! I've very little this time. Zob — where's Zob?

KLESHTCH [*crossing to table*] He isn't here . . .

BUBNOFF. Waughrr! Bull-dog! Brr-zz-zz! — Turkey-cock! Don't bark and don't growl! Drink — make merry — and don't be sullen! — I treat everybody — Brother, I love to treat — if I were rich, I'd run a free saloon! So help me God, I would! With an orchestra and a lot of singers! Come, every one! Drink and eat — listen to the music — and rest in peace! Beggars — come, all you beggars — and enter my saloon free of charge! Satine — you can have half my capital — just like that!

SATINE. You better give me all you have straight away!

BUBNOFF. All my capital? Right now? Well — here's a ruble — here's twenty kopecks — five kopecks — sun flower seeds — and that's all!

SATINE. That's splendid! It'll be safer with me — I'll gamble with it . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF. I'm a witness — the money was given you for safe-keeping. How much is it?

BUBNOFF. You? You're a camel — we don't need witnesses . . .

ALYOSHKA [*comes in barefoot*] Brothers, I got my feet wet!

BUBNOFF. Go on and get your throat wet — and nothing'll happen — you're a fine fellow — you sing and you play — that's all right! But it's too bad you drink — drink, little brother, is harmful, very harmful . . .

ALYOSHKA. I judge by you! Only when you're drunk do you resemble a human being . . . Kleshtch! Is my concertina fixed? [*Sings and dances*]

"If my mug were not so attractive,
My sweetheart wouldn't love me at all . . ."

Boys, I'm frozen — it's cold . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Hm — and may I ask who's this sweetheart?

BUBNOFF. Shut up! From now on, brother, you are neither a policeman nor an uncle!

ALYOSHKA. Just auntie's husband!

BUBNOFF. One of your nieces is in jail — the other one's dying . . .

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*proudly*] You lie! She's not dying — she disappeared — without trace . . .

[*Satine roars.*]

BUBNOFF. All the same, brothers — a man without nieces isn't an uncle!

ALYOSHKA. Your Excellency! Listen to the drummer of the retired billygoats' brigade! [*Sings*]

"My sweetheart has money,
I haven't a cent.
But I'm a cheerful,
Merry lad!"

Oh — isn't it cold!

[*Enter Zob. From now until the final curtain men and women drift in, undress, and stretch out on the bunks, grumbling.*]

ZOB. Bubnoff! Why did you run off?

BUBNOFF. Come here — sit down — brother, let's sing my favorite ditty, eh?

THE TARTAR. Night was made for sleep! Sing your songs in the daytime!

SATINE. Well — never mind, Prince — come here!

THE TARTAR. What do you mean — never mind? There's going to be a noise — there always is when people sing!

BUBNOFF [*crossing to the Tartar*] Count — ah — I mean Prince — how's your hand? Did they cut it off?

THE TARTAR. What for? We'll wait and see — perhaps it won't be necessary . . . a hand isn't made of iron — it won't take long to cut it off . . .

ZOB. It's your own affair, Hassanka! You'll be good for nothing without your hand. We're judged by our hands and backs — without the pride of your hand, you're no longer a human being. Tobacco-carting — that's your business! Come on — have a drink of vodka — and stop worrying!

KVASHNYA [*comes in*] Ah, my beloved fellow-lodgers! It's horrible outside — snow and slush . . . is my policeman here?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. Right here!

KVASHNYA. Wearing my blouse again? And drunk, eh? What's the idea?

MIEDVIEDIEFF. In celebration of Bubnoff's birthday . . . besides, it's cold . . .

KVASHNYA. Better look out — stop fooling about and go to sleep!

MIEDVIEDIEFF [*goes to kitchen*] Sleep? I can — I want to — it's time — [*Exit*]

SATINE. What's the matter? Why are you so strict with him?

KVASHNYA. You can't be otherwise, friend. You have to be strict with his sort. I took him as a partner. I thought he'd be of some benefit to me — because he's a military man — and you're a rough lot . . . and I am a woman — and now he's turned drunkard — that won't do at all!

SATINE. You picked a good one for partner!

KVASHNYA. Couldn't get a better one. You wouldn't want to live with me . . . you think you're too fine! And even if you did it wouldn't last more than a week . . . you gamble me and all I own away at cards!

SATINE [*roars with laughter*] That's true, landlady — I'd gamble . . .

KVASHNYA. Yes, yes. Alyoshka!

ALYOSHKA. Here he is — I, myself!

KVASHNYA. What do you mean by gossiping about me?

ALYOSHKA. I? I speak out everything — whatever my conscience tells me. There, I say, is a wonderful woman! Splendid meat, fat, bones — over four hundred pounds! But brains — ? Not an ounce!

KVASHNYA. You're a liar! I've lot of brains! What do you mean by saying I beat my policeman?

ALYOSHKA. I thought you did — when you pulled him by the hair!

KVASHNYA [*laughs*] You fool! You aren't blind, are you? Why wash dirty linen in public? And — it hurts his feelings — that's why he took to drink . . .

ALYOSHKA. It's true, evidently, that even a chicken likes vodka . . .

[*Satine and Kleshtch roar with laughter.*]

KVASHNYA. Go on — show your teeth! What sort of a man are you anyway, Alyoshka?

ALYOSHKA. Oh — I am first-rate! Master of all trades! I follow my nose!

BUBNOFF [*near the Tartar's bunk*] Come on! At all events — we won't let you sleep! We'll sing all night. Zob!

ZOB. Sing — ? All right . . .

ALYOSHKA. And I'll play . . .

SATINE. We'll listen!

THE TARTAR [*smiling*] Well — Bubnoff — you devil — bring the vodka — we'll drink — we'll have a hell of a good time! The end will come soon enough — and then we'll be dead!

BUBNOFF. Fill his glass, Satine! Zob — sit down! Ah — brothers — what does a man need after all? There, for instance, I've had a drink — and I'm happy! Zob! Start my favorite song! I'll sing — and then I'll cry. . . .

ZOB [*begins to sing*]

"The sun rises and sets . . ."

BUBNOFF [*joining in*]

"But my prison is all dark. . . ."

[*Door opens quickly.*]

THE BARON [*on the threshold; yells*] Hey — you — come — come here! Out in the waste — in the yard . . . over there . . . The actor — he's hanged himself. . . .

[*Silence. All stare at the Baron. Behind him appears Nastya, and slowly, her eyes wide with horror, she walks to the table.*]

SATINE [*in a matter-of-fact voice*] Damned fool — he ruined the song . . . !

CURTAIN.

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

BY

ANTON TCHEKHOFF

INTRODUCTION

"The Cherry Orchard" is the masterpiece of Anton Tchekhoff. It is also his swan song — to his craft and almost to life itself, for in less than six months after it reached the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre, January 30 (our calendar), 1904, he was finally overcome in the long struggle against the illness which had kept him in the South and had prevented him from attending the premieres of his previous plays, "The Sea-Gull," "Uncle Vanya" and "The Three Sisters."

Like the sad and pensive radiance of Indian summer was Tchekhoff's association with the Art Theatre during the months of composition and rehearsal and the triumphal hour of production of this pathetic study of a passing generation. Tchekhoff, too, was passing — Anton Pavlovitch, who had made the Moscow Art Theatre famous at the same time that the theatre was conferring a like boon upon the playwright. Tchekhoff was passing; his associates felt the presentiment, whether they admitted it or not.

Severely simple and apparently effortless in structure and in its limpid, illuminating detail, "The Cherry Orchard" really cost its author painful and protracted labor. "The Three Sisters" was barely started on its long and honored career early in 1901 when the Art Theatre asked Tchekhoff for another manuscript. He refused, for he still considered himself a story teller rather than a playwright, despite his three emphatic

successes on the stage. Shortly after, though, his conversations contained hints of a new dramatic idea growing in his mind. By the summer of 1902 not only the outline of the plot but the name of the play were determined.

Another year passed before the new play reached anything like final proportions. "My play 'The Cherry Orchard' is not yet finished"; he wrote to Constantin Stanislavsky, the director of the theatre, in July, 1903, "it makes slow progress, which I put down to laziness, fine weather, and the difficulty of the subject." And again, in the early autumn, he confesses in a letter to a friend: "I write four lines a day and those with intolerable torment." The manuscript was completed at last and sent off to Moscow and until November, the playwright's letters are filled with suggestions for interpreting the various rôles.

When the cold dry winter set in, the physicians permitted Tchekhoff — who, by the way, was a physician himself by profession — to return to Moscow to attend rehearsals of the new play. This time he remained for the premiere, which was accidentally set for his name-day.

And what a premiere it was! The Art Theatre made it the occasion for celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Tchekhoff's entry upon a literary career. There was no longer any doubt about the public reception of a play from his pen. The battle had been won. A new tradition had been established. The three preceding plays remained in the repertory, held in deeper and deeper affection as the years passed. The premiere of the fourth could be made a gala occasion without timidity or fear of embarrassing aftermath.

Every literary and dramatic and public organization in Moscow, therefore, including the Art Theatre itself in the person of one of its co-founders, Vladimir Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, united to bestow honors on the playwright. The strict custom of the Art Theatre, whereby not even applause is permitted to break the continuity of a performance, was violated for once. After the third act, while Tchekhoff stood shy and confused on the stage, deputation followed deputation to pay him tribute, including even a representative from the Small Imperial Theatre, home of classical traditions and the Art Theatre's bitterest rival.

Tchekhoff was overwhelmed by this reception which, without his knowing it, was tinged with sadness by his friends' realization that it was probably a case of "Hail and Farewell!" He had never had very secure faith in the play, strange as it may seem, considering his acute critical sense where the work of others was concerned. During rehearsal he had said, half in jest, half in earnest, "Buy it for three thousand rubles!" "You wish to sell?" came the answer. "We guarantee ten thousand!"

And so it is not remarkable to find him writing to a friend six days after the premiere: "At the first performance of 'The Cherry Orchard,' they gave me an ovation, so lavish, warm, and really so unexpected, that I can't get over it even now."

Nor is it remarkable that the Moscow Art Theatre holds "The Cherry Orchard" almost as holy ground. With this play it bade good-bye to a fellow-craftsman with whom its destiny was strangely intertwined. Its various rôles have been guarded jealously by the actors who first embodied them. And so to-day nearly two decades after, Stanislavsky still plays Gaieff; Mme. Knipper, the playwright's widow, Mme. Ranevskaya;

Leonidoff, Lopakhin; Moskvin, the blundering clerk Yepikhodoff; Gribunin, the garrulous landowner Semyonoff-Pishchik; and Alexandroff, the footman Yasha.

THE EDITOR.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA RANEVSKAYA — *A landowner.*
ANYA — *Her daughter, aged seventeen.*
VARYA — *Her adopted daughter, aged twenty-seven.*
LEONID ANDREIEVITCH GAIEFF —
Liuboff Andreievna's brother.
YERMOLAI ALEXEIEVITCH LOPAKHIN — *A merchant.*
PETER SERGEIEVITCH TROFIMOFF — *A student.*
BORIS BORISOVITCH SEMYONOFF-PISHCHIK —
A landowner.
CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA — *A governess.*
SEMYON PANTELEIEVITCH YEPIKHODOFF — *A clerk.*
DUNYASHA (AVDOTYA FYODOROVNA) —
A maidservant.
FIRCE — *An old footman, aged eighty-seven.*
YASHA — *A young footman.*
A TRAMP.
A STATION-MASTER.
POST-OFFICE CLERK.
GUESTS.
A SERVANT.

The action takes place on Mme. Ranevskaya's estate.

ACT ONE.

A room still called the nursery. One of the doors leads into Anya's room. It is almost sunrise of a day in May. The cherry-trees are in bloom, but the chill of early morning is in the garden. The windows are shut. Dunyasha enters with a candle, and Lopakhin with a book in his hand.

LOPAKHIN. The train has arrived, thank God. What's the time?

DUNYASHA. It will soon be two. [*Blows out candle*] It is already light.

LOPAKHIN. How late was the train? At least two hours. [*Yawns and stretches himself*] I certainly made a fool of myself! I came here on purpose to meet them at the station, and then overslept myself . . . in my chair. It's a pity. I wish you'd called me.

DUNYASHA. I thought you'd gone. [*Listening*] I think I hear them coming.

LOPAKHIN [*listens*] No . . . They have to collect their baggage and so on. . . . [*Pause*] Liuboff Andreievna has been living abroad for five years; I don't know what she'll be like now . . . She's a

good sort — an easy, simple person. I remember when I was a boy of fifteen, my father, who is dead — he used to keep a shop in the village here — hit me with his fist, and my nose bled . . . We had gone into the yard for something or other, and he was a little drunk. Liuboff Andreievna, as I remember her now, was still young, and very slight, and she took me to the wash-stand here in this very room, the nursery. She said, "Don't cry, my small peasant, all wounds heal at last." [*Pause*] . . . Small peasant! My father was a peasant, true, but here I am in a white vest and brown shoes . . . like a pearl in an oyster shell. I'm rich now, with lots of money, but just think about it and examine me, and you'll find I'm still a peasant to the core. [*Turns over the pages of his book*] Here I've been reading this book, but I understood nothing. I read and fell asleep. [*Pause*]

DUNYASHA. The dogs didn't sleep all night; they feel that their masters are coming.

LOPAKHIN. What's the matter with you, Dunyasha. . . .

DUNYASHA. My hands are shaking. I am going to faint.

LOPAKHIN. You're too sensitive, Dunyasha. You dress just like a lady, and you do your hair like one, too. You shouldn't. You must remember your place in life.

YEPIKHODOFF [*enters with a bouquet. He wears a short jacket and brilliantly polished boots which squeak audibly. He drops the bouquet as he enters, then picks it up*] The gardener sent these; says they're to go into the dining-room. [*Gives the bouquet to Dunyasha.*]

LOPAKHIN. And you'll bring me some kvass.

DUNYASHA. Yes, sir. [*Exit.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. There's a frost this morning — three degrees, and the cherry-trees are all in flower. I can't approve of our climate. [*Sighs*] I can't. Our climate refuses to favor us even this once. And, Yermolai Alexeievitch, allow me to say to you, in addition, that I bought myself a pair of boots two days ago, and I beg to assure you that they squeak in a perfectly intolerable manner. What shall I put on them?

LOPAKHIN. Go away. You bore me.

YEPIKHODOFF. Some misfortune happens to me every day. But I don't complain; I'm used to it, and I even smile at it. [*Dunyasha comes in and brings Lopakhin a glass of kvass*] I am going. [*Knocks over a chair*] There. . . . [*Triumphantly*] There, you see, if I may use the word, what circumstances I am in, so to speak. It is simply extraordinary. [*Exit.*]

DUNYASHA. Let me confess to you, Yermolai Alexeievitch, that Yepikhodoff has proposed to me.

LOPAKHIN. Ah!

DUNYASHA. I don't know what to do about it. He's a nice young man, but every now and then, when he begins talking, you can't understand a word he says. It sounds sincere enough, only I can't understand it. I think I like him. He's madly in love with me. He's an unlucky man; every day something happens to him. We tease him about it. They call him "Two-and-twenty troubles."

LOPAKHIN [*listens*] There they come, I think.

DUNYASHA. They're coming! What's the matter with me? I'm cold all over.

LOPAKHIN. There they are, really. Let's go and meet them. Will she know me? We haven't seen each other for five years.

DUNYASHA [*excited*] I shall faint in a minute. . . . Oh, I'm fainting!

[*Two carriages are heard driving up to the house. Lopakhin and Dunyasha quickly go out. The stage is empty. There are noises in the adjoining rooms. Firce, leaning on a stick, walks quickly across the stage; he has just been to meet Liuboff Andreievna. He wears an old-fashioned livery and a tall hat. He is saying something to himself, but not a word can be made out. The noise back stage grows louder and louder. A voice is heard: "Let's go in there." Enter Liuboff Andreievna, Anya, and Charlotta Ivanovna*

leading a little dog on a chain, all dressed in traveling clothes, Varya in a long coat and with a kerchief on her head. Gaieff, Semyonoff-Pishchik, Lopakhin, Dunyasha with a parcel and an umbrella, and a servant with suitcases — all cross the room.]

ANYA. Let's go through here. Do you remember this room, mother?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*joyfully, through her tears*] The nursery!

VARYA. How cold it is! My hands are quite numb. [*To Liuboff Andreievna*] Your rooms, the white one and the violet one, are just as they used to be, mother.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. My dear, beautiful nursery . . . I used to sleep here when I was a baby. [*Kisses her brother, then Varya, then her brother again*] And Varya is just as she used to be, exactly like a nun. And I recognized Dunyasha. [*Kisses her.*]

GAIEFF. The train was two hours late. There now; how's that for punctuality?

CHARLOTTA [*to Pishchik*] My dog eats nuts, too.

PISHCHIK [*astonished*] Just imagine! [*All leave except Anya and Dunyasha.*]

DUNYASHA. We did have to wait for you! [*Takes off Anya's cloak and hat.*]

ANYA. For four nights on the journey I didn't sleep . . . I'm awfully cold.

DUNYASHA. You left during Lent, when it was snowing and frosty, but now? Darling! [*Laughs and kisses her*] We did have to wait for you, my darling pet! . . . I must tell you at once, I can't wait a minute.

ANYA [*listlessly*] Something else now . . . ?

DUNYASHA. The clerk, Yepikhodoff, proposed to me after Easter.

ANYA. Always the same . . . [*Puts her hair straight*] I've lost all my hairpins . . . [*She is very tired, and even staggers as she walks.*]

DUNYASHA. I don't know what to think about it. He loves me, he loves me so much!

ANYA [*looks into her room; in a gentle voice*] My room, my windows, as if I'd never left! I'm at home! To-morrow morning I'll get up and run out into the garden . . . Oh, if I could only sleep! I didn't sleep the whole journey, I was so restless.

DUNYASHA. Peter Sergeievitch came two days ago.

ANYA [*joyfully*] Peter!

DUNYASHA. He sleeps in the bath-house, he lives there. He said he was afraid he'd be in the way. [*Looks at her watch*] I should call him, but Varvara

Mihkailovna told me not to. "Don't wake him," she said.

[*Enter Varya, a bunch of keys hanging from her belt.*]

VARYA. Dunyasha, coffee, quick. Mother wishes some.

DUNYASHA. In a moment. [*Exit.*]

VARYA. Well, you've come, thank God. Home again. [*Caressing her*] My darling is home again! My pretty one is back at last!

ANYA. I had an awful time, I tell you.

VARYA. I can just imagine it!

ANYA. I went away in Holy Week; it was very cold then. Charlotta talked the whole way and would go on performing her tricks. Why did you force her on me?

VARYA. You couldn't go alone, darling, at seventeen!

ANYA. We went to Paris; it's cold there and snowing. I talk French perfectly dreadfully. My mother lives on the fifth floor. I go to her, and find her there with several Frenchmen, women, an old abbé with a book, and everything wreathed in tobacco smoke and the whole place so uninviting. I suddenly became very sorry for mother — so sorry that I took her head in my arms and hugged her and wouldn't

let her go. Then mother started hugging me and crying. . . .

VARYA [*weeping*] Don't say any more, don't say any more . . .

ANYA. She's already sold her villa near Mentone; she has nothing left, nothing. And I haven't a kopeck either; we only just managed to get here. And mother won't understand! We had dinner at a station; she asked for all the expensive things, and tipped the waiters one ruble each. And Charlotta too. Yasha demands a share, too — It is simply awful. Mother has a footman now, Yasha; we've brought him along.

ANYA. How's business? Has the interest been paid?

VARYA. Not much chance of that.

ANYA. Oh God, oh God . . .

VARYA. The place will be sold in August.

ANYA. Oh God . . .

LOPAKHIN [*looks in at the door and moos*] Moo! [*Exit.*]

VARYA [*through her tears*] I'd like to . . . [*Shakes her fist.*]

ANYA [*embraces Varya, softly*] Varya, has he proposed to you? [*Varya shakes her head*] But he loves you. . . . Why don't you decide? Why do you keep on waiting?

VARYA. I'm afraid it will all come to nothing.

He's a busy man. I'm not his sort . . . he pays no attention to me. Bless the man, I don't wish to see him. . . . But everybody talks about our marriage, everybody congratulates me, and there's nothing in it at all, it's all like a dream. [*A different voice*] You have a brooch that looks like a bee.

ANYA [*wistfully*] Mother bought it. [*Goes into her room, and talks lightly, like a child*] In Paris I went up in a balloon!

VARYA. My darling has come back, my pretty one is home again! [*Dunyasha has already returned with the coffee-pot and is making coffee*] I go about all day, looking after the house, and I think all the time, if only you could marry a rich man, I'd be happy and would go away somewhere by myself, perhaps to Kieff . . . or to Moscow, and so on, from one holy place to another. I'd tramp and tramp. That would be splendid!

ANYA. The birds are singing in the garden. What time is it now?

VARYA. It must be getting on towards three. It's time you went to sleep, darling. [*Goes into Anya's room*] Splendid!

[*Enter Yasha with a plaid shawl and a traveling bag.*]

YASHA [*crossing the stage; politely*] May I go this way?

DUNYASHA. I hardly recognized you, Yasha. You have changed abroad.

YASHA. Hm . . . and who are you?

DUNYASHA. When you went away I was only so high. [*Showing with her hand*] I'm Dunyasha, the daughter of Fyodor Kozoyedoff. You don't remember?

YASHA. Oh, you small cucumber! [*Looks round and embraces her. She screams and drops a saucer. Yasha goes out quickly.*]

VARYA [*in the doorway, in an angry voice*] What's that?

DUNYASHA [*through her tears*] I've broken a saucer.

VARYA. It may bring luck.

ANYA [*coming out of her room*] We must tell mother that Peter's here.

VARYA. I told them not to call him.

ANYA [*thoughtfully*] Father died six years ago, and a month later my brother Grisha was drowned in the river — such a dear little boy of seven! Mother couldn't bear it; she went away, away, without looking round. . . . [*Shudders*] How I understand her; if only she knew! [*Pause*] And Peter Trofimoff was Grisha's tutor, he might remind her. . . .

[*Enter Firce in a short jacket and white vest. Goes to the coffee-pot.*]

FIRCE. Madame is going to have a bite here. [*He*

is preoccupied, putting on white gloves] Is the coffee ready? [*To Dunyasha, severely*] You!

DUNYASHA. Oh, dear me . . . ! [*Leaving hurriedly.*]

FIRCE [*fussing round the coffee-pot*] Oh, you bungler . . . [*Murmurs to himself*] Back from Paris . . . the master went to Paris once . . . in a carriage . . . [*Laughs.*]

VARYA. What are you mumbling, Firce?

FIRCE. I beg your pardon? [*Joyfully*] The mistress is home again. I've lived to see her! I don't care if I die now . . . [*Weeps with joy.*]

[*Enter Liuboff Andreievna, Gaieff, Lopakhin, and Semyonoff-Pishchik, the latter in a long jacket of thin cloth and loose trousers. Gaieff, coming in, moves his arms and body about as if he were playing billiards.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Let me remember now. Red into the corner! Twice into the center!

GAIEFF. Right into the pocket! Once upon a time you and I, sister, both slept in this room, and now I'm fifty-one; it does seem strange.

LOPAKHIN. Yes, time does fly!

GAIEFF. What?

LOPAKHIN. I said that time does fly.

GAIEFF. It smells of patchouli here.

ANYA. I'm going to bed. Good-night, mother. [*Kisses her.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. My dear little child. [*Kisses her hand*] Glad to be at home? I can't get over it.

ANYA. Good-night, uncle.

GAIEFF [*Kisses her face and hands*] God be with you. How you do resemble your mother! [*To his sister*] You were just like her at her age, Liuba.

[*Anya gives her hand to Lopakhin and Pishchik and goes out shutting the door behind her.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. She's awfully tired.

PISHCHIK. It's a very long journey.

VARYA [*to Lopakhin and Pishchik*] Well, gentlemen, it's getting on toward three. High time to retire.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*laughs*] You're just the same as ever, Varya. [*Draws her close and kisses her*] I'll have some coffee now; then we'll all go. [*Firce lays a cushion under her feet*] Thank you, dear. I'm used to coffee. I drink it day and night. Thank you, dear old man. [*Kisses Firce.*]

VARYA. I'll go and see whether they've brought in all the luggage. [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Is it really I who am sitting here? [*Laughs*] I feel like jumping about and waving my arms. [*Covers her face with her hands*] But suppose I'm dreaming! God knows I love my own country, I love it dearly; I couldn't look out of the

railway carriage, I cried so much. [*Through her tears*] Still, I must have my coffee. Thank you, Firce. Thank you, dear old man. I'm so glad you're still with us.

FIRCE. The day before yesterday.

GAIEFF. He doesn't hear well.

LOPAKHIN. I have to go to Kharkoff by the five o'clock train. I'm awfully sorry! I should like to have a look at you, to gossip a little. You're as fine-looking as ever.

PISHCHIK [*breathes heavily*] Even finer-looking . . . dressed in Paris fashion . . . confound it all.

LOPAKHIN. Your brother, Leonid Andreievitch, says I'm a snob, a usurer, but that is absolutely nothing to me. Let him talk. Only I do wish you would believe in me as you once did, that your wonderful, touching eyes would look at me as they used to. Merciful God! My father was the serf of your grandfather and your own father, but you — more than anybody else — did so much for me once upon a time that I've forgotten everything and love you as if you were one of my own family. . . . and even more.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I can't sit still, I can't! [*Jumps up and walks about in great excitement*] I'll never survive this happiness. . . . You can laugh at me; I'm a silly woman . . . My dear little cupboard. [*Kisses cupboard*] My little table.

GAIEFF. Nurse died during your absence.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*sits and drinks coffee*] Yes, God rest her soul. I heard by letter.

GAIEFF. And Anastasia died, too. Peter Kosoy has left me and now lives in town with the Commissioner of Police. [*Takes a box of candy out of his pocket and sucks a piece.*]

PISHCHIK. My daughter, Dashenka, sends her love.

LOPAKHIN. I wish to say something very pleasant, very delightful, to you. [*Looks at his watch*] I'm going away at once, I haven't much time . . . but I'll tell you all about it in two or three words. As you already know, your cherry orchard is to be sold to pay your debts, and the sale is arranged for August 22; but you needn't be alarmed, dear madam, you may sleep in peace; there's a way out. Here's my plan. Please listen carefully! Your estate is only thirteen miles from town, the railway runs past it and if the cherry orchard and the land by the river are broken up into building parcels and are then leased as villa sites, you'll have at least twenty-five thousand rubles a year income.

GAIEFF. How utterly absurd!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I don't understand you at all, Yermolai Alexeievitch.

LOPAKHIN. You will get twenty-five rubles a year for each dessiatin from the leaseholders at the very

least, and if you advertise now, I'm willing to bet that you won't have a vacant parcel left by the autumn; they'll all go. In a word, you're saved. I congratulate you. Only, of course, you'll have to straighten things out carefully . . . For instance, you'll have to pull down all the old buildings, this house, which is of no use to anybody now, and cut down the old cherry orchard . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Cut it down? My dear man, you must forgive me, but you don't understand anything at all. If there's anything interesting or remarkable in the whole province, it's this cherry orchard of ours.

LOPAKHIN. The only remarkable thing about the orchard is its great size. It bears fruit only every other year, and even then you don't know what to do with the cherries; nobody buys any.

GAIEFF. This orchard is mentioned in the "Encyclopaedia."

LOPAKHIN [*looks at his watch*] If we can't think of anything and don't make up our minds, then on August 22 both the cherry orchard and the whole estate will be sold at auction. Make up your mind! I swear there's no other way out. You may believe me!

FIRCE. In the old days, forty or fifty years ago,

they dried the cherries, soaked them and pickled them, and made jam, and it used to happen that . . .

GAIEFF. Be quiet, Firce.

FIRCE. And then we'd send the dried cherries in carts to Moscow and Kharkoff. And money! And the dried cherries were soft, juicy, sweet, and fragrant. They knew the way. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. How was it done?

FIRCE. They've forgotten. Nobody remembers.

PISHCHIK [*to Liuboff Andreievna*] What about Paris? Eh? Did you eat frogs?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I ate crocodiles.

PISHCHIK. Just imagine!

LOPAKHIN. Formerly there were only the gentry and the laborers, in the villages, and now the people who live in villas have arrived. All towns now, even small ones, are surrounded by villas. And it's safe to say that in twenty years' time the villa residents will have increased tremendously. At present they sit on their balconies, and drink tea, but it may well happen that they'll commence to cultivate their patches of land, and then your cherry orchard will be happy, rich, glorious.

GAIEFF [*angry*] What nonsense!

[*Enter Varya and Yasha.*]

VARYA. There are two telegrams for you, mother

dear. [*Picks out a key and noisily unlocks an antique cupboard*] Here they are.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. They're from Paris . . . [*Tears them up without reading them*] I'm through with Paris.

GAIEFF. And do you know, Liuba, how old this cupboard is? A week ago I pulled out the bottom drawer; I looked and saw numbers carved in it. That cupboard was made exactly a hundred years ago. What do you think of that? What? We could celebrate its jubilee. It hasn't a soul of its own, but still, say what you will, it's a fine piece of furniture.

PISHCHIK [*astonished*] A hundred years . . . Just imagine!

GAIEFF. Yes . . . it's a genuine thing. [*Examining it*] My dear and honored cupboard! I congratulate you on your career, which has for more than a hundred years been devoted to the noble ideals of good and justice; your silent call to productive labor has not decreased in the hundred years [*Weeping*] during which you have inspired in our generation virtue and courage and faith for a better future, holding before our eyes lofty ideals and the knowledge of a common consciousness. [*Pause.*]

LOPAKHIN. Yes.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You're just the same as ever, Leon.

GAIEFF [*a little confused*] Off the white on the right, into the corner pocket. Red ball goes into the center pocket!

LOPAKHIN [*looks at his watch*] It's time I went.

YASHA [*giving Liuboff Andreievna her medicine*] Will you take your pills now?

PISHCHIK. You shouldn't take medicines, dearest; they do you neither harm nor good . . . Give them to me, dearest. [*Takes the pills, turns them out into the palm of his hand, blows on them, puts them into his mouth, and drinks some kvass*] There!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*frightened*] You're mad!

PISHCHIK. I've swallowed all the pills.

LOPAKHIN. You greedy man! [*All laugh.*]

FIRCE. They were here in Easter week and ate half a pailful of cucumbers . . . [*Mumbles.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What does he mean?

VARYA. He's been mumbling away for three years. We're used to that.

YASHA. Senile decay.

[*Charlotta Ivanovna crosses the stage, dressed in white: she is very thin and tightly laced; she has a lorgnette at her waist.*]

LOPAKHIN. Excuse me, Charlotta Ivanovna, I haven't bidden you welcome yet. [*Tries to kiss her hand.*]

CHARLOTTA [*takes her hand away*] If you let

people kiss your hand, then they'll want your elbow, then your shoulder, and then . . .

LOPAKHIN. I'm out of luck to-day! [*All laugh*] Show us a trick, Charlotta Ivanovna!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Charlotta, do a trick for us!

CHARLOTTA. It's not necessary. I must go to bed. [*Exit.*]

LOPAKHIN. We shall see each other in three weeks. [*Kisses Liuboff Andreievna's hand*] Now, good-bye. It's time I went. [*To Gaieff*] See you again. [*Kisses Pishchik*] Au revoir. [*Gives his hand to Varya, then to Firce and to Yasha*] I don't want to go away. [*To Liuboff Andreievna*] If you think about the villas and come to a decision, just let me know, and I'll raise a loan of 50,000 rubles at once. Think about it seriously.

VARYA [*angrily*] Do go, now!

LOPAKHIN. I'm going, I'm going . . . [*Exit.*]

GAIEFF. Snob. Still, I beg pardon . . . Varya's going to marry him, he's Varya's young man.

VARYA. Don't talk too much, uncle.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why not, Varya? I should be glad of it. He's a good man.

PISHCHIK. To speak the honest truth . . . he's a worthy man . . . And my Dashenka . . . also says that . . . she says lots of things. [*Snores, but wakes*

up again at once] But still, dear madam, if you could lend me . . . 240 rubles . . . to pay the interest on my mortgage to-morrow . . .

VARYA [*frightened*] We haven't it, we haven't it!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. It's quite true. I've nothing at all.

PISHCHIK. You'll manage somehow. [*Laughs*] I never lose hope. I used to think, "Everything's lost now. I'm a dead man," when, lo and behold, a railway was built across my land . . . and they paid me for it. And something else will happen to-day or to-morrow. Dashenka may win 20,000 rubles . . . she's got a lottery ticket.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. The coffee's all gone, we can go to bed.

FIRCE [*brushing Gaieff's trousers; in an insistent tone*] You are wearing the wrong trousers again. What am I to do with you?

VARYA [*quietly*] Anya's asleep. [*Opens window quietly*] The sun has risen already; it isn't cold. Look, mother, dear; what lovely trees! And the air! The starlings are singing!

GAIEFF [*opens the other window*] The whole garden is white. You haven't forgotten, Liuba? There's that long avenue going straight, straight, like an arrow; it shines on moonlight nights. Do you remember? You haven't forgotten?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*looks into the garden*] Oh, my childhood, days of my innocence! In this nursery I used to sleep; I used to look out from here into the orchard. Happiness used to wake with me every morning, and then it was just as it is now; nothing has changed. [*Laughs with joy*] It's all, all white! Oh, my orchard! After the dreary autumns and the cold winters, you're young again, full of happiness, the angels of heaven haven't left you . . . If only I could take this strong burden from my breast and shoulders, if I could forget my past!

GAIEFF. Yes, and they'll sell this orchard to pay off the debts. How strange it seems!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Look, there's my dead mother walking in the orchard . . . dressed in white! [*Laughs with joy*] That's she.

GAIEFF. Where?

VARYA. God be with you, mother dear!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Nobody is there; I thought I saw somebody. On the right, at the turning by the summer-house, a little white tree bent down, resembling a woman. [*Enter Trofimoff in a worn student uniform and spectacles*] What a marvelous garden! White masses of flowers, the blue sky. . . .

TROFIMOFF. Liuboff Andreievna! [*She looks round at him*] I only wish to pay my respects to you, and I'll go away. [*Kisses her hand warmly*] I was

told to wait till the morning, but I didn't have the patience. [*Liuboff Andreievna looks surprised.*]

VARYA [*crying*] It's Peter Trofimoff.

TROFIMOFF. Peter Trofimoff, once the tutor of your Grisha . . . Have I changed so much? [*Liuboff Andreievna embraces him and cries softly.*]

GAIEFF [*confused*] That's enough, that's enough, Liuba.

VARYA [*weeps*] But I told you, Peter, to wait till to-morrow.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. My Grisha . . . my boy . . . Grisha . . . my son.

VARYA. What are we to do, dear mother? It's the will of God.

TROFIMOFF [*softly, through his tears*] It's all right, it's all right.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*still weeping*] My boy's dead; he was drowned. Why? Why, my friend? [*Softly*] Anya's asleep in there. I am speaking so loudly, making so much noise . . . Well, Peter? What's made you look so bad? Why have you grown so old?

TROFIMOFF. In the train an old woman called me a decayed gentleman.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You were quite a boy then, a jolly little student, and now your hair has grown

thin and you wear spectacles. Are you really still a student? [*Goes to the door.*]

TROFIMOFF. I suppose I shall always be a student.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*kisses her brother, then Varya*] Well, let's go to bed . . . And you've grown older, Leonid.

PISHCHIK [*follows her*] Yes, we must go to bed . . . Oh, my gout! I'll stay the night here. If only, Liuboff Andreievna, my dear, you could get me 240 rubles to-morrow morning —

GAIEFF. Still the same story.

PISHCHIK. Two hundred and forty rubles . . . to pay the interest on the mortgage.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I haven't any money, dear man.

PISHCHIK. I'll give it back . . . it's a small sum . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Well then, Leonid will give it to you . . . Let him have it, Leonid.

GAIEFF. By all means; hold out your hand.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why not? He wants it; he'll give it back.

[*Liuboff Andreievna, Trofimoff, Pishchik and Firce go out. Gaieff, Varya, and Yasha remain.*]

GAIEFF. My sister hasn't lost the habit of throwing money away. [*To Yasha*] Don't come near me; you smell like a chicken-coop!

YASHA [*grins*] You are just the same as ever, Leonid Andreievitch.

GAIEFF. Really? [*To Varya*] What's he saying?

VARYA [*to Yasha*] Your mother has come from the village; she's been sitting in the servants' room since yesterday, and wishes to see you . . .

YASHA. Bless the woman!

VARYA. Shameless man.

YASHA. A lot of use there is in her coming. She might just as well have come to-morrow. [*Exit.*]

VARYA. Mother hasn't altered a bit, she's just as she always was. She'd give away everything, if the idea only entered her head.

GAIEFF. Yes . . . [*Pause*] If there's any illness for which people have a remedy of remedies, you may be sure that particular illness is incurable. I work my brains as hard as I can. I've several remedies, very many, and that really means I've none at all. It would be nice to inherit a fortune from somebody, it would be nice to marry off our Anya to a rich man, it would be nice to go to Yaroslavl and try my luck with my aunt the Countess. My aunt is very, very rich.

VARYA [*weeps*] If only God would help us.

GAIEFF. Don't cry. My aunt's very rich, but she doesn't like us. My sister, in the first place, married a lawyer, not an aristocrat . . . [*Anya appears in the doorway*] She not only married a man who was not

an aristocrat, but she behaved in a way which cannot be described as proper. She's nice and kind and charming and I'm very fond of her, but say what you will in her favor and you still have to admit that she's bad; you can feel it in her slightest movements.

VARYA [*whispers*] Anya's in the doorway.

GAIEFF. Really? [*Pause*] It's curious, something's blown into my right eye . . . I can't see out of it properly. And on Thursday, when I was at the District Court . . .

[*Enter Anya.*]

VARYA. Why aren't you in bed, Anya?

ANYA. I can't sleep. It's no use.

GAIEFF. My darling! [*Kisses Anya's face and hands*] My child. [*Crying*] You're not my niece, you're my angel, you're my all . . . Believe in me, believe . . .

ANYA. I do believe you, uncle. Everybody loves and respects you . . . but, uncle dear, you should say nothing, no more than that. What were you saying just now about my mother, about your own sister! Why did you say such things?

GAIEFF. Yes, yes. [*Covers his face with her hand*] Yes, really, it was terrible. Save me, my God! And only just now I made a speech before a cupboard . . . it's so silly! And only when I'd finished I knew how silly it was.

VARYA. Yes, uncle dear, you really should say less Keep quiet, that's all.

ANYA. You'd be so much happier if you only kept quiet.

GAIEFF. All right, I'll be quiet. [*Kisses their hands*] I'll be quiet. But let's talk business. On Thursday I was in the District Court, and a lot of us met there and we began to talk of this, that, and the other, and now I think I can arrange a loan to pay the interest to the bank.

VARYA. If only God would help us!

GAIEFF. I'll go on Tuesday. I'll talk to you about it again. [*To Varya*] Don't cry. [*To Anya*] Your mother will have a talk with Lopakhin; he, of course, won't refuse . . . And when you've rested you'll go to Yaroslavl to the Countess, your grandmother. So you see, we shall have three irons in the fire, and we shall be safe. We'll pay the interest. I'm certain. [*Puts some candy in his mouth*] I swear on my honor, on anything you wish, that the estate will not be sold! [*Excitedly*] I swear on my happiness! Here's my hand on it! You may call me a dishonorable sinner if I let it be sold at auction! I swear by all I am!

ANYA [*calm again and happy*] How good and clever you are, uncle. [*Embraces him*] I'm happy now! I'm happy! All's well!

[*Enter Firce.*]

FIRCE [*reproachfully*] Leonid Andreievitch, don't you fear God? When are you going to bed?

GAIEFF. Soon, soon. You go away, Firce. I'll undress myself. Well, children, au revoir . . .! I'll tell you the details to-morrow, but let's go to bed now. [*Kisses Anya and Varya*] I'm a man of the eighties . . . People don't praise those years much, but I can still say that I've suffered for my beliefs. The peasants don't love me for nothing, I assure you. We have to learn how to understand the peasants! We should learn how . . .

ANYA. You're doing it again, uncle!

VARYA. Be quiet, uncle!

FIRCE [*angrily*] Leonid Andreievitch!

GAIEFF. I'm coming, I'm coming . . . Go to bed now. Off two cushions into the center! I turn over a new leaf . . . [*Exit. Firce goes out after him.*]

ANYA. I'm more quiet now. I don't wish to go to Yaroslavl, I don't like grandmother; but I'm calm now, thanks to uncle. [*Sits down.*]

VARYA. It's time to go to sleep. I'll go. There have been amazing things happening here during your absence. In the old servants' quarter of the house, as you know, only the old people live — little old Yefim and Polya and Yevstigny, and Karp as well. They commenced letting tramps or the like spend the night there — I said nothing. Then I heard that they

were saying I had ordered them to be fed on peas and nothing else; from meanness, you see . . . And it was all Yevstigny's doing. Very well, I thought, if that's what the matter is, just you wait. So I call Yevstigny . . . [*Yawns*] He comes. "What's this," I say. "Yevstigny, you old fool" . . . [*Looks at Anya*] Anya dear! [*Pause*] She's dozed off . . . [*Takes Anya's arm*] Let's go to bed . . . Come along! . . . [*Leads her*] My darling's gone to sleep! Come on . . . [*They go. In the distance, the other side of the orchard, a shepherd plays his pipe. Trofimoff crosses the stage and stops when he sees Varya and Anya*] Sh! She's asleep, asleep. Come on, dear.

ANYA [*quietly, half-asleep*] I'm so tired . . . I hear bells . . . uncle, dear! Mother and uncle!

VARYA. Come on, dear, come on! [*They go into Anya's room.*]

TROFIMOFF [*deeply moved*] Sunshine! Springtime of my life!

CURTAIN.

ACT TWO.

A field. An old, tumble-down shrine, which has been long abandoned; near it a well and large stones, which apparently are old tombstones, and an old garden seat. The road to Gaieff's estate is seen. On one side dark poplars rise, behind them the cherry orchard begins. In the distance is a row of telegraph poles, and on the far horizon are the indistinct signs of a large town, which can be seen only on the finest and clearest days. It is near sunset. Charlotta, Yasha, and Dunyasha are sitting on a bench. Yepikhodoff stands nearby playing on a guitar; all seem thoughtful. Charlotta wears a man's old peaked cap; she has unslung a rifle from her shoulders and is straightening the strap-buckle.

CHARLOTTA [*thoughtfully*] I haven't a real passport. I don't know how old I am, but I think I'm young. When I was a little girl my father and mother used to travel from fair to fair and give very good performances, and I used to do the somersault and various little things. And when papa and mamma died, a German lady took me to her home and brought me up. I liked it. I grew up and became a governess. And

where I came from and who I am, I don't know. . . . Who my parents were — perhaps they weren't married — I don't know. [*Takes a cucumber from her pocket and eats*] I don't know anything. [*Pause*] I do wish to talk, but I haven't anybody to talk to. . . . I haven't anybody at all.

YEPIKHODOFF [*plays on the guitar and sings*]

"What do I care for this noisy earth?
What do I care for friend and foe?"
I like playing on the mandolin!

DUNYASHA. That's a guitar, not a mandolin. [*Looks at herself in a little pocket mirror and powders herself.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. For a lovelorn lunatic, this constitutes a mandolin. [*Sings*]

"Oh would the fire of love
Warm my pitiful heart!"

[*Yasha sings, too.*]

CHARLOTTA. These people sing so badly. . . . Bah! Like jackals.

DUNYASHA [*to Yasha*] Still it must be nice to live abroad.

YASHA. Yes, it is. I can't differ from you there. [*Yawns and lights a cigar.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. That is perfectly natural. Abroad everything is in such complete harmony.

A SCENE FROM ACT II OF TCHEHOFF'S "THE CHERRY ORCHARD" AT THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

YASHA. That goes without saying.

YEPIKHODOFF. I'm an educated man, I read various remarkable books, but I cannot understand where I want to go, myself — whether to keep on living or to shoot myself, as it were. So at any rate, I always carry a revolver about with me. Here it is. [*Shows a revolver.*]

CHARLOTTA. I've finished. Now I'll go. [*Slings the rifle over her shoulder*] You, Yepikhodoff, are a very clever man and very frightful; women must be madly in love with you. Brrr! [*Going*] These wise people are all so stupid. I've nobody to talk to. I'm always alone, alone; I've nobody at all . . . and I don't know who I am or why I live. [*Exit slowly.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. As a matter of fact, independently of everything else, I must express my conviction, among other things, that fate has been as merciless in her dealings with me as a storm is to a small ship. Suppose, let us grant, I am wrong; then why did I wake up this morning, for example, and behold an enormous spider on my chest as big as this? [*Shows with both hands*] And if I do drink kvass, why must I always find in the glass such an unsociable animal as a cockroach! [*Pause*] Have you read Buckle? [*Pause*] May I have a few words with you, Avdotya Fyodorovna?

DUNYASHA. Go on!

YEPIKHODOFF. I should prefer to be alone with you. [*Sighs.*]

DUNYASHA [*shy*] Very well, only please bring me my cloak first. . . . It's by the cupboard. It's a little damp here.

YEPIKHODOFF. Very well. . . . I'll bring it. . . . Now I know what to do with my revolver. [*Takes guitar and exit, strumming.*]

YASHA. Two-and-twenty troubles! A foolish man, between you and me and the gatepost. [*Yawns.*]

DUNYASHA. I hope to goodness he won't shoot himself. [*Pause*] I'm so nervous, so worried. I entered service when I was quite a little girl, and now I'm not used to common life, and my hands are as white as a lady's. I'm so tender and so delicate now, respectable and afraid of everything. . . . I'm so frightened. And I don't know what will happen to my nerves if you deceive me, Yasha.

YASHA [*kisses her*] Tiny cucumber! Of course, every girl must respect herself; there's nothing I dislike more than a badly behaved girl.

DUNYASHA. I'm so much in love with you; you're educated, you can talk about everything. [*Pause.*]

YASHA [*yawns*] Yes, I think that if a girl loves anybody, it means she's immoral. [*Pause*] It's nice to smoke a cigar out in the open air. . . . [*Listens*] Somebody's coming. It's the mistress, and people with

her. [*Dunyasha embraces him suddenly*] Go to the house, as if you'd been bathing in the river; go by this path, or they'll run across you and will think I've been meeting you. I can't stand that sort of thing.

DUNYASHA [*coughs quietly*] Your cigar has given me a headache.

[*Exit. Yasha remains, sitting by the shrine. Enter Liuboff Andreievna, Gaieff, and Lopakhin.*]

LOPAKHIN. You must make up your mind definitely — there's no time to waste. The question is perfectly simple. Are you willing to let the land for villas or no? Just one word, yes or no? Just one word!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Who's smoking bad cigars here? [*Sits.*]

GAIEFF. They built that railway; that's made this place very convenient. [*Sits*] Went to town and had lunch . . . red in the center! I'd like to go to the house now and have just one game.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You'll have time.

LOPAKHIN. Just one word! [*Imploringly*] Give me an answer!

GAIEFF [*yawns*] Really!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*looks in her purse*] I had a lot of money yesterday, but there's very little left today. My poor Varya feeds everybody on milk soup to save money; in the kitchen the old people get peas

only; and I spend recklessly. [*Drops the purse, scattering gold coins*] There, money all over the place.

YASHA. Permit me to pick them up. [*Collects the coins.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Please do, Yasha. And why did I go and lunch there? . . . A terrible restaurant with a band and tablecloths smelling of soap. . . . Why do you drink so much, Leon? Why do you eat so much? Why do you talk so much? You talked too much again to-day in the restaurant, and it wasn't at all to the point — about the seventies and about decadents. And to whom? Talking to the waiters about decadents! Imagine!

LOPAKHIN. Yes.

GAIEFF [*waves his hand*] I can't be cured, that's obvious. . . . [*Irritably to Yasha*] What's the matter? Why do you always manage to keep in front of me?

YASHA [*laughs*] I can't listen to your voice without laughing.

GAIEFF [*to his sister*] Either he or I . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Go away, Yasha. Go!

YASHA [*gives purse to Liuboff Andreievna*] I'll go at once. [*Hardly able to keep from laughing*] This minute. . . . [*Exit.*]

LOPAKHIN. That rich man Deriganoff is preparing to buy your estate. They say he'll attend the sale in person.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Where did you hear that?

LOPAKHIN. They say so in town.

GAIEFF. Our aunt in Yaroslavl promised to send something, but I don't know when or how much.

LOPAKHIN. How much will she send? A hundred thousand rubles? Or two, perhaps?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'd be glad if we get ten or fifteen thousand.

LOPAKHIN. You must excuse my saying so, but I've never met such frivolous people as you before, or anybody so unbusinesslike and peculiar. Here I am telling you in plain language that your estate will be sold, and you don't seem to understand.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What are we to do? Tell us, what?

LOPAKHIN. I tell you every day. Every day I say the same thing. Both the cherry orchard and the land must be leased for villas and at once, — the auction is staring you in the face: Understand! Once you definitely make up your minds to the villas, you'll have as much money as you wish and you'll be saved.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Villas and villa residents — it's so vulgar, pardon me.

GAIEFF. I agree with you entirely.

LOPAKHIN. I must cry or yell or faint. I can't! You're too much for me! [*To Gaieff*] You old woman!

GAIEFF. Really!

LOPAKHIN. Old woman! [*Going out.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*frightened*] No, don't go away, stop; be a dear. Please. Perhaps we'll find some way out!

LOPAKHIN. There is nothing to think about.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Please don't go. It's nicer when you're here. . . . [*Pause*] I keep on waiting for something to happen, as if the house were going to collapse over our heads.

GAIEFF [*thinking deeply*] Double in the corner . . . across the center.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We have been too sinful. . . .

LOPAKHIN. What sins have you been guilty of?

GAIEFF [*puts candy in his mouth*] They say that I've wasted all my money in buying candy. [*Laughs.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Oh, my sins . . . I've always scattered money about without being able to control myself, like a madwoman, and I married a man who made nothing but debts. My husband died of champagne — he drank terribly — and to my misfortune, I fell in love with another man and went off with him, and just at that time — it was my first punishment, a blow that struck me squarely on the head — here, in the river . . . my boy was drowned, and I went away, abroad, never to return, never to see

this river again. . . . I closed my eyes and ran without thinking, but he ran after me . . . without mercy, without respect. I bought a villa near Mentone because he fell ill there, and for three days I knew no rest, day or night; the sick man wore me out, and my soul dried up. And last year, when they had sold the villa to pay my debts, I went to Paris, and there he robbed me of all I had and threw me over and went off with another woman. I tried to poison myself. . . . It was so silly, so shameful . . . And suddenly I longed to go back to Russia, my own country, with my little daughter . . . [*Wipes her tears*] Lord, Lord be merciful to me, forgive my sins! Punish me no more! [*Takes a telegram from her pocket*] I had this to-day from Paris. . . . He begs my forgiveness, he implores me to return . . . [*Tears it up*] Don't I hear music? [*Listens.*]

GAIEFF. That is our famous Jewish band. You remember — four violins, a flute, and a double-bass.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. So it still exists? It would be nice if they came some evening.

LOPAKHIN [*listens*] I can't hear. . . . [*Sings quietly*] "For money will the Germans make a Frenchman of a Russian." [*Laughs*] I saw such an awfully funny thing at the theatre last night.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'm quite sure there wasn't anything funny at all. You shouldn't go and see

plays, you ought to go and look at yourself. What a drab life you lead! What a lot of unnecessary things you say!

LOPAKHIN. It's true. To speak the honest truth, we live a silly life. [*Pause*] My father was a peasant, an idiot, he understood nothing, he didn't teach me, he was always drunk, and always beat me. As a matter of fact, I'm a fool and an idiot, too. I've never learned anything, my hand-writing is bad, I write so that I'm quite ashamed before people, like a pig!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You should marry, my friend.

LOPAKHIN. Yes . . . that's true.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why not our Varya? She's a nice girl.

LOPAKHIN. Yes.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. She's a simple, unaffected girl, works all day, and, what matters most, she's in love with you. And you've liked her for a long time.

LOPAKHIN. Well? I don't mind . . . She's a nice girl. [*Pause.*]

GAIEFF. I'm offered a place in a bank. Six thousand rubles a year . . . Did you hear?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What's the matter with you! Stay where you are . . .

[*Enter Firce with an overcoat.*]

FIRCE [*to Gaieff*] Please sir, put this on, it's damp.

GAIEFF [*putting it on*] You're a nuisance, old man.

FIRCE. It's all very well. . . . You went away this morning without telling me. [*Examining Gaieff.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. How old you've grown, Firce!

FIRCE. I beg your pardon?

LOPAKHIN. She says you've grown very old!

FIRCE. I've lived a long time. They were getting ready to marry me before your father was born . . . [*Laughs*] And when the Emancipation came I was already first valet. Only I didn't agree with the Emancipation and remained with my masters . . . [*Pause*] I remember everybody was happy, but they didn't know why.

LOPAKHIN. It was very good for them in the old days. At any rate, they beat them formerly.

FIRCE [*not hearing*] Rather. The peasants kept their distance from the masters and the masters kept their distance from the peasants, but now everything is in a muddle, and you can't make head or tail of anything.

GAIEFF. Be quiet, Firce. I have to go to town tomorrow. I have the promise of an introduction to a General who may lend me money on a note.

LOPAKHIN. Nothing will come of it. And you won't pay your interest, don't you worry.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. He's out of his head. There's no General at all.

[*Enter Trofimoff, Anya, and Varya.*]

GAIEFF. Here, come on, folks!

ANYA. Mother's sitting down here.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*tenderly*] Come, come, my dears . . . [*Embracing Anya and Varya*] If you two only knew how much I love you. Sit down next to me, like that. [*All sit down.*]

LOPAKHIN. Our eternal student is always with the ladies.

TROFIMOFF. That's none of your business.

LOPAKHIN. He'll soon be fifty, and he's still a student.

TROFIMOFF. Stop your silly jokes!

LOPAKHIN. Getting angry, eh, silly?

TROFIMOFF. Shut up, can't you?

LOPAKHIN [*laughs*] I wonder what you think of me?

TROFIMOFF. I think, Yermolai Alexeievitch, that you're rich, and you'll soon be a millionaire. Just as the wild beast which eats everything it finds is needed to make certain changes in cosmic matter, so you are needed too. [*All laugh.*]

VARYA. Better tell us something about the planets, Peter.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. No, let's continue yesterday's discussion.

TROFIMOFF. What was it about?

GAIEFF. About the proud man.

TROFIMOFF. Yesterday we talked for a long time, but we arrived at no conclusion. In your opinion there's something mystic in pride. Perhaps you are right from your point of view, but if you look at the matter sanely, without complicating it, then what pride can there be, what logic in a man who is imperfectly made, physiologically speaking, and who in the vast majority of cases is coarse and stupid and profoundly unhappy? We must stop admiring one another. We must work, nothing more.

GAIEFF. You'll die, all the same.

TROFIMOFF. Who knows? And what does it mean — you'll die? Perhaps a man has a hundred senses, and when he dies only the five known to us are destroyed and the remaining ninety-five are left alive.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. How clever of you, Peter!

LOPAKHIN [*ironically*] Oh, awfully!

TROFIMOFF. The human race progresses, perfecting its powers. Everything that is unattainable now will some day be near and intelligible, but we must work, we must help with all our energy, those who seek to know the truth. Meanwhile in Russia only

a very few of us work. The vast majority of those intellectuals whom I know seek for nothing, do nothing, and are at present incapable of hard work. They call themselves intellectuals, but they use "thou" and "thee" to their servants, they treat the peasants like animals, they learn slowly, they read nothing with discernment, they do absolutely nothing, they gabble on about science, about art they understand little. They are all serious, they all have severe faces, they all talk about important things. They philosophize, and at the same time, the vast majority of us, ninety-nine out of a hundred, live like savages, fighting and cursing on the slightest excuse, have filthy table manners, sleep in the dirt, in stuffiness among fleas, stinks, smells, moral stench, and so on. . . . And it's obvious that all our nice talk is only carried on to delude ourselves and others. Tell me, where are those crèches we hear so much of? And where are those reading-rooms? People only write novels about them; they don't really exist. Only dirt, coarseness, and Asiatic barbarism really exist. . . . I'm afraid; and I don't like serious faces at all. I don't like serious conversation. Let's say no more about it.

LOPAKHIN. You know, I get up at five every morning, I work till evening, I am always dealing with money — my own and other people's — and I see what others are like. You have only to start doing

anything at all, and you'll find out how few honest, honorable people there are. Sometimes, when I can't sleep, I think: "Oh Lord, you've given us huge forests, infinite fields, and endless horizons, and we, living here, ought really to be giants."

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You want giants, do you? . . . They're only good in stories, and even there they frighten one. [*Yepikhodoff enters at the back of the stage playing his guitar. Liuboff Andreievna speaks thoughtfully*] Yepikhodoff has come.

ANYA [*thoughtfully*] Yepikhodoff has come.

GAIEFF. The sun's set.

TROFIMOFF. Yes.

GAIEFF [*not loudly, as if declaiming*] Oh, Nature, thou art wonderful, thou shinest with eternal radiance! Oh, beautiful and lofty one, thou whom we call mother, thou containest in thyself life and death, thou livest and destroyest. . . .

VARYA [*entreatingly*] Uncle, dear!

ANYA. Uncle, you're doing it again!

TROFIMOFF. You'd better double the yellow into the center.

GAIEFF. I'll be quiet, I'll be quiet.

[*They all sit thoughtfully. It is quiet. Only the mumbling of Firce is heard. Suddenly a distant sound comes as if from the sky, the sound of a breaking string, which dies away sadly.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What's that?

LOPAKHIN. I don't know. Perhaps a bucket fell, down a well somewhere. But it's a long way off.

GAIEFF. Or perhaps it's some bird . . . like a heron.

TROFIMOFF. Or an owl.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*Shudders*] It's unpleasant, somehow. [*A pause.*]

FIRCE. Before the catastrophe the same thing happened. An owl screamed and the samovar hummed without stopping.

GAIEFF. Before what catastrophe?

FIRCE. Before the Emancipation. [*A pause.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You know, my friends, let's go in; it's evening now. [*To Anya*] You've tears in your eyes. . . . What is it, little girl? [*Embraces her.*]

ANYA. It's nothing, mother.

TROFIMOFF. Some one's coming.

[*Enter a Tramp in an old white peaked cap and overcoat. He is slightly drunk.*]

TRAMP. Excuse me, may I go this way straight through to the station?

GAIEFF. You may. Go along this path. . . .

TRAMP. I thank you with all my heart. [*Hiccoughs*] Lovely weather. . . . [*Declaims*] My brother, my suffering brother. . . . Come out on the Volga,

you whose groans . . . [*To Varya*] Mademoiselle, please give a hungry Russian thirty kopecks. . . .

[*Varya screams, frightened.*]

LOPAKHIN [*angrily*] Everybody should have some sort of manners!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*with a start*] Take this . . . here you are . . . [*Feels in her purse*] There's no silver . . . It doesn't matter, here's gold.

TRAMP. I am very grateful to you! [*Exit. Laughter.*]

VARYA [*frightened*] I'm going. I'm going. . . . Oh, mother dear, at home there's nothing for the servants to eat, and yet you gave him gold.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What is to be done with such a fool as I am! At home, I'll give you everything I have. Yermolai Alexeievitch, lend me some more! . . .

LOPAKHIN. Very well.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Let's go, it's time. And Varya, we've settled your affairs; I congratulate you.

VARYA [*crying*] You shouldn't joke about this, mother.

LOPAKHIN. Ophmelia! Get thee to a nunnery.

GAIEFF. My hands are trembling; I haven't played billiards for a long time.

LOPAKHIN. Ophmelia! Nymph! Remember me in thine orisons!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Come along; it'll soon be supper-time.

VARYA. He frightened me. My heart is beating fast.

LOPAKHIN. Let me remind you, ladies and gentlemen, on August 22nd, the cherry orchard will be sold. Think of that! . . . Think of that! . . .

[*All go out except Trofimoff and Anya.*]

ANYA [*laughs*] Thanks to the tramp who frightened Varvara, we're alone now.

TROFIMOFF. Varya's afraid that we may fall in love with each other and won't leave us alone for days on end. Her narrow mind won't permit her to understand that we are above love. To escape all the petty and deceptive things which prevent our being happy and free, such is the aim and object of our lives. Forward! We go irresistibly on to that bright star which burns there, in the distance! Don't lag behind, friends!

ANYA [*clapping her hands*] How beautifully you talk! [*Pause*] It is glorious here to-day!

TROFIMOFF. Yes, the weather is wonderful.

ANYA. What have you done to me, Peter? I don't love the cherry orchard as I used to. I loved it so tenderly, I thought there was no better place in the world than our orchard.

TROFIMOFF. All Russia is our orchard. The land is great and beautiful, there are many glorious places

in it. [*Pause*] Think, Anya, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, and all your ancestors were serf-owners, they owned human beings; and now, doesn't something human look at you from every cherry in the orchard, every leaf and every branch? Don't you hear voices . . .? Oh, it's awful, your orchard is frightful; and when in the evening or at night you walk through the orchard, then the old bark on the trees sheds a dim light and the old cherry-trees seem to dream of all that happened a hundred, two hundred years ago, and are burdened with their heavy visions. Still, we've left those two hundred years, behind us. So far we've gained nothing at all — we don't yet know what the past will bring us — we only philosophize, we complain that we are dull, or we drink vodka. For it's so clear that to begin to live in the present we must first redeem the past, and that can be done only by suffering, by strenuous, uninterrupted work. Understand that, Anya.

ANYA. The house in which we live has long ceased to be our house; I shall go away, I give you my word.

TROFIMOFF. If you have the keys of the household, throw them down the well and go away. Be as free as the wind.

ANYA [*enthusiastically*] How beautifully you said that!

TROFIMOFF. Believe me, Anya, believe me! I'm

not thirty yet, I'm young, I'm still a student, but I have gone through so much already! I'm as hungry as the winter, I'm ill, I'm shaken. I'm as poor as a beggar, and where haven't I been — fate has tossed me everywhere! But my soul is always my own; every minute of the day and the night it is filled with glorious and dim visions. I feel that happiness is coming, Anya, I see it already. . . .

ANYA [*thoughtful*] The moon is rising.

[*Yepikhodoff is heard playing the same sad song on his guitar. The moon rises. Somewhere near the poplars Varya is looking for Anya and calling, "Anya, where are you?"*]

TROFIMOFF. Yes, the moon has risen. [*Pause*] There is happiness, there it comes; it comes nearer and nearer; I hear its footsteps already. And if we do not see it we shall not know it, but what does that matter? Others will see it!

THE VOICE OF VARYA. Anya! Where are you?

TROFIMOFF. That's Varya again! [*Angry*] Disgraceful!

ANYA. Never mind. Let's go to the river. It's nice there.

TROFIMOFF. Let's go. [*They leave.*]

THE VOICE OF VARYA. Anya! Anya!

CURTAIN.

ACT THREE.

A reception-room, separated by an arch from a drawing-room. Lighted chandelier. A Jewish band, the one referred to in Act II, is heard playing in another room. Evening. In the drawing-room the cotillion is being danced. Voice of Semyonoff Pishchik, "Promenade à une paire!" Dancers come into the reception-room; the first pair are Pishchik and Charlotta Ivanovna; the second Trofimoff and Liuboff Andreievna; the third, Anya and the Post Office Clerk; the fourth Varya and the Station-Master, and so on. Varya is crying gently and dries her eyes as she dances. Dunyasha is in the last pair. They go off into the drawing-room, shouting, "Grand rond, balancez:" and "Les cavaliers à genoux et remerciez vos dames!" Firce, in a dress-coat, carries a tray with seltzer-water across the stage. Enter Pishchik and Trofimoff from the drawing-room.

PISHCHIK. I'm full-blooded and already I've had two strokes; it's hard for me to dance, but, as they say, if you're in Rome, you must do as the Romans do. I've the constitution of a horse. My late father, who

liked a joke, peace to his ashes, used to say, talking of our ancestors, that the ancient stock of the Semyonoff Pishchiks was descended from the identical horse that Caligula appointed senator. . . . [*Sits*] But the trouble is, I've no money! A hungry dog believes only in meat. [*Drops off to sleep and wakes up again immediately*] So I. . . . believe only in money. . . .

TROFIMOFF. Yes. There is something horsy about your figure.

PISHCHIK. Well . . . a horse is a valuable animal . . . you can sell a horse.

[*The sound of billiard playing comes from the next room. Varya appears under the arch.*]

TROFIMOFF [*teasing*] Madame Lopakhin! Madame Lopakhin!

VARYA [*angry*] Decayed gentleman!

TROFIMOFF. Yes, I am a decayed gentleman, and I'm proud of it!

VARYA [*bitterly*] We've hired the musicians, but how are they to be paid? [*Exit.*]

TROFIMOFF [*to Pishchik*] If you would put to better use the energy which you are wasting day by day, in looking for money to pay interest, I believe you'd finally succeed in moving heaven and earth.

PISHCHIK. Nietzsche . . . . a philosopher . . . a very great and famous man . . . a man of enormous brain, says in his books that you can forge bank-notes.

TROFIMOFF. And have you read Nietzsche?

PISHCHIK. Well . . . Dashenka told me. Now I'm in such a position, I wouldn't mind making counterfeit money . . . I have to pay 310 rubles day after to-morrow . . . I've obtained 130 already . . . [*Feels his pockets, nervously*] I've lost the money! The money's gone! [*Crying*] Where's the money? [*Joyfully*] Here it is in the lining. . . . Why I was in a cold sweat!

[*Enter Liuboff Andreievna and Charlotta Ivanovna.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*humming a Caucasian dance song*] What is keeping Leonid so long? What's he doing in town? [*To Dunyasha*] Dunyasha, give the musicians some tea.

TROFIMOFF. The business is off, I suppose.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. And the musicians needn't have come, and we needn't have arranged this ball. . . . Well, never mind. . . . [*Sits and sings softly.*]

CHARLOTTA [*gives a pack of cards to Pishchik*] Here's a deck of cards, think of any card you like.

PISHCHIK. I've thought of one.

CHARLOTTA. Now shuffle. All right, now. Pass them over, my dear Mr. Pishchik. Eins, zwei, drei! Now look and you'll find it in your hind pocket.

PISHCHIK [*takes a card out of his hind pocket*] Eight of spades, quite right! [*Surprised*] Just imagine!

CHARLOTTA [*holds the deck of cards in the palm of*

her hand. To Trofimoff] Now tell me quickly. What's the top card?

TROFIMOFF. Well, the queen of spades.

CHARLOTTA. Right! [*To Pishchik*] And now? What card's on top?

PISHCHIK. Ace of hearts.

CHARLOTTA. Right! [*Claps her hands, the deck of cards vanishes*] How lovely the weather is to-day. [*A mysterious woman's voice answers her, as if from under the floor, "Oh yes, it's lovely weather, madam."*] You are so beautiful, you are my ideal. [*Voice, "You, Madam, please me very much too."*]

STATION-MASTER [*applauds*] Madame the ventriloquist, bravo!

PISHCHIK [*surprised*] Just imagine! Delightful, Charlotta Ivanovna . . . I'm simply in love. . . .

CHARLOTTA. In love? [*Shrugging her shoulders*] Can you love? Guter Mensch aber schlechter Musikant.

TROFIMOFF [*slaps Pishchik on the shoulder*] Oh, you horse!

CHARLOTTA. Attention, please, here's another trick. [*Takes a shawl from a chair*] Here's a very nice plaid shawl, I'm going to sell it. . . . [*Shakes it*] Won't somebody buy it?

PISHCHIK [*astonished*] Just imagine!

CHARLOTTA. Eins, zwei, drei. [*She quickly lifts*

up the shawl, which is hanging down. Anya appears behind it; she bows and runs to her mother, hugs her and runs back to the drawing-room amid general applause.]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*applauds*] Bravo, bravo!

CHARLOTTA. Once again! Eins, zwei, drei! [*Lifts the shawl. Varya appears behind it and bows.*]

PISHCHIK [*astonished*] Just imagine!

CHARLOTTA. The end! [*Throws the shawl at Pishchik, curtseys and runs into the drawing-room.*]

PISHCHIK [*runs after her*] Little witch! . . . What? Would you? [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Leonid hasn't come yet. I don't understand what is keeping him so long in town! Everything must be over by now. The estate must be sold; or, if the sale never came off, then why does he stay away so long?

VARYA [*tries to soothe her*] Uncle has bought it. I'm certain of it.

TROFIMOFF [*sarcastically*] Oh, yes!

VARYA. Grandmother sent him her authority to buy it in her name and transfer the debt to her. She's doing it for Anya. And I'm certain that God will help us and that Uncle will buy it.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Grandmother sent fifteen thousand rubles from Yaroslavl to buy the property in her name — she won't trust us — and that wasn't even

enough to pay the interest. [*Covers her face with her hands*] My fate will be settled to-day, my fate. . . .

TROFIMOFF [*teasing Varya*] Madame Lopakhin!

VARYA [*angry*] Eternal student? He's been expelled from the university, twice already.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why are you growing angry, Varya? He's teasing you about Lopakhin. Well, what of it? You can marry Lopakhin if you wish. He's a good, interesting man. . . . You needn't if you don't wish to; nobody is going to force you against your will, my darling.

VARYA. I look at the matter seriously, mother dear, to be quite frank. He's a good man, and I like him.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Then marry him. I don't understand what you're waiting for.

VARYA. I can't propose to him myself, mother dear. People have been talking about him to me for two years now, but he either says nothing, or jokes about it. I understand. He's getting rich, he's busy, he can't bother about me. If I had some money, even a little, even only a hundred rubles, I'd throw up everything and go away. I'd go into a convent.

TROFIMOFF. What bliss!

VARYA [*to Trofimoff*] A student should have common sense! [*Gently, in tears*] How ugly you are now, Peter, how old you've grown! [*To Liuboff*

Andreievna, no longer crying] But I can't go on without working, mother dear. I'm eager to be doing something every minute. [*Enter Yasha.*]

YASHA [*nearly laughing*] Yepikhodoff's broken a billiard cue! [*Exit.*]

VARYA. Why is Yepikhodoff here? Who said he could play billiards? I don't understand these people. [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Don't tease her, Peter, you see that she's unhappy enough without it.

TROFIMOFF. She undertakes too much herself; she is continually interfering in other people's business. The whole summer she gave Anya and myself not a moment's peace. She's afraid we'll have a romance all to ourselves. What concern of hers is it? As if I'd ever given her grounds to believe I'd stoop to such vulgarity! We are above love.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Then I suppose I must be beneath love. [*In agitation*] Why isn't Leonid here? If I only knew whether the estate is sold or not! The catastrophe seems to me so unbelievable that I don't know what to think, I'm all at sea . . . I may scream . . . or do something foolish. Save me, Peter. Say something, say something.

TROFIMOFF. Isn't it all the same whether the estate is sold to-day or not? For a long time it's been a foregone conclusion that it would be sold. There's no

turning back, the path is obliterated. Be calm, dear, you shouldn't deceive yourself; for once in your life, at any rate, you must look the truth straight in the eyes.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What truth? You see where truth is, and where falsehood is, but I seem to have lost my sight and see nothing. You settle all important questions boldly, but tell me, dear, isn't it because you're young, because you have not as yet had time to suffer in settling any one of these questions? You look forward boldly, but isn't it because you neither feel nor expect anything terrible, because so far life has been hidden from your young eyes? You are bolder, more honest, deeper than we are, but only think, be just a little magnanimous, and have pity on me. I was born here, my father and mother lived here, my grandfather, too. I love this house. I couldn't understand my life without that cherry orchard, and if it really must be sold, sell me with it! [*Embraces Trofimoff, kisses his forehead*] My son was drowned here . . . [*Weeps*] Have pity on me, good, kind man.

TROFIMOFF. You know that I sympathize with all my heart.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Yes, but it should be said differently, differently. . . . [*Takes another handkerchief, a telegram falls on the floor*] I'm so sick at heart to-day, you can't imagine. Here it's so noisy, my

soul trembles at every sound. I shake all over, and I can't go away by myself, I'm afraid of the silence. Don't judge me harshly, Peter. . . . I love you, as if you belonged to the family. I'd gladly let Anya marry you, I swear it, only dear, you ought to work to finish your studies. You don't do anything, only fate tosses you about from place to place, it's so strange. . . . Isn't it true? Yes? And you ought to do something to your beard to make it grow better. [*Laughs*] You are funny!

TROFIMOFF [*picking up telegram*] I don't wish to be a Beau Brummel.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. This telegram's from Paris. I receive one every day. Yesterday and to-day. That wild man is ill again, he's bad again. . . . He begs for forgiveness, and implores me to come, and I really should go to Paris to be near him. You look severe, Peter, but what can I do, my dear, what can I do? He's ill, he's alone, unhappy, and who's to look after him, who's to keep him out of harm's way, to give him his medicine punctually? And why should I conceal it and say nothing about it? I love him, that's plain, I love him, I love him. . . . That love is a stone round my neck; I shall sink with it to the bottom, but I love that stone and can't live without it. [*Squeezes Trofimoff's hand*] Don't think harshly of me, Peter, don't say anything to me, don't say . . .

TROFIMOFF [*weeping*] For God's sake forgive my speaking candidly, but that man has robbed you!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. No, no, you should not say that! [*Stops her ears.*]

TROFIMOFF. But he's a scoundrel, you alone don't know it! He's a petty thief, a nobody. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*angry, but restrained*] You're twenty-six or twenty-seven, and still a schoolboy of the second grade!

TROFIMOFF. Why not?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You should be a man, at your age you should be able to understand those who love. And you should be in love yourself, you must fall in love! [*Angry*] Yes, yes! You aren't pure, you're just a freak, a queer fellow, a funny fungus.

TROFIMOFF [*in horror*] What is she saying?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. "I'm above love!" You're not above love, you're just what our Firce calls a bungler. Not to have a mistress at your age!

TROFIMOFF [*in horror*] This is terrible! What is she saying? [*Goes quickly into the drawing-room, seizing his head with both his hands*] It's awful . . . I can't stand it, I'll go away. [*Exit, but returns at once*] All is over between us! [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*shouts after him*] Peter, wait! Silly boy, I was joking! Peter! [*Somebody is heard going out and falling downstairs noisily. Anya*

and Varya scream; laughter is heard immediately] What's that? [*Anya comes running in, laughing.*]

ANYA. Peter's fallen downstairs! [*Runs out again.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. This Peter's a funny creature!

[*The Station-Master stands in the middle of the drawing-room and recites "The Magdalen" by Tolstoy. They listen to him, but he has delivered only a few lines when a waltz is heard from the front room, and the recitation is stopped. Everybody dances. Trofimoff, Anya, Varya, and Liuboff Andreievna come in from the front room.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Well, Peter . . . you pure soul . . . I beg your pardon. . . . let's dance.

[*She dances with Peter. Anya and Varya dance. Firce enters and leans his stick against a side door. Yasha has also come in and watches the dance.*]

YASHA. Well, grandfather?

FIRCE. I'm not well. At our balls some time ago, generals and barons and admirals used to dance, and now we send for post-office clerks and the station-master, and even they come reluctantly. I'm very weak. The dead master, the grandfather, used to give everybody sealing-wax when anything was wrong. I've taken sealing-wax every day for twenty years, and more; possibly that's why I am still alive.

YASHA. I'm tired of you, grandfather. [*Yawns*] If you'd only hurry up and kick the bucket.

FIRCE [*muttering*] Oh you . . . bungler!

[*Trofimoff and Liuboff Andreievna dance in the reception-room, then into the sitting-room.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Merci. I'll sit down. [*Sits*] I'm tired.

[*Enter Anya.*]

ANYA [*excited*] Somebody in the kitchen was saying just now that the cherry orchard was sold to-day.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Sold to whom?

ANYA. He didn't say to whom. He went away. [*Dances out into the reception-room with Trofimoff.*]

YASHA. Some old man was chattering about it a long time ago. A stranger!

FIRCE. And Leonid Andreievitch isn't here yet, he hasn't come. He's wearing a light autumn overcoat. He'll catch cold. Oh, these young fellows.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'll die of this. Go and find out, Yasha, to whom it's sold.

YASHA. Oh, but he's been gone a long time, the old man. [*Laughs*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*slightly vexed*] Why do you laugh? What are you so happy about?

YASHA. Yepikhodoff's too funny. He's a foolish man. Two-and-twenty troubles.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Firce, if the estate is sold, where will you go?

FIRCE. I'll go wherever you command me to go.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why do you look like that? Are you ill? I think you should go to bed. . . .

FIRCE. Yes . . . [*With a smile*] I'll go to bed, and who'll hand things round and give orders without me? I've the whole house on my shoulders.

YASHA [*to Liuboff Andreievna*] Liuboff Andreievna! I wish to ask a favor of you, if you'll be so kind! If you go to Paris again, take me along. I beg of you! It's absolutely impossible for me to remain here. [*Looking round; in an undertone*] What's the good of talking about it? You see for yourself that this is an uncivilized country, with an immoral population, and it's so dull. The food in the kitchen is wretched, and here's this Firce walking about mumbling all kinds of inappropriate things. Take me with you. Please!

[*Enter Pishchik.*]

PISHCHIK. May I have the pleasure of a little waltz, dear lady . . . ? [*Liuboff Andreievna goes to him*] But all the same, you wonderful woman, I must have 180 little rubles from you. . . . I must. . . . [*They dance*] 180 little rubles. . . . [*They go through into the drawing-room.*]

YASHA [*sings softly*]

"Oh, will you understand
My soul's deep restlessness?"

[*In the drawing-room a figure in a gray top-hat and in baggy check trousers is waving its hands; and there are cries of "Bravo, Charlotta Ivanovna!"*]

DUNYASHA [*stops to powder her face*] The young mistress tells me to dance — there are lots of gentlemen, but few ladies — and my head whirls when I dance, and my heart beats, Firce Nikolaievitch; the Post-office clerk told me something just now that almost took my breath away.

[*The music grows faint.*]

FIRCE. What did he tell you?

DUNYASHA. He says, "You're like a little flower."

YASHA [*yawns*] Impolite. . . . [*Exit.*]

DUNYASHA. Like a little flower. I'm such a delicate girl; I simply love tender words.

FIRCE. You'll lose your head.

[*Enter Yepikhodoff.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. You, Avdotya Fyodorovna, are about as anxious to see me as if I were some insect. [*Sighs*] Oh, life!

DUNYASHA. What do you wish?

YEPIKHODOFF. Perhaps, doubtless, you may be right. [*Sighs*] But, certainly, if you consider the matter in that light, then you, if I may say so, and

you must excuse my candidness, have absolutely reduced me to the state of mind in which I find myself. I know my fate. Every day something unfortunate happens to me, and I've grown used to it a long time ago. I never look at my fate with a smile. You gave me your word, and though I. . . .

DUNYASHA. Please, we'll talk later on, but leave me alone now. I'm thinking now. [*Fans herself.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. Every day something unfortunate happens to me, and I, if I may so express myself, only smile, and even laugh.

[*Varya enters from the drawing-room.*]

VARYA. Haven't you gone yet, Semyon? You really have no respect for anybody. [*To Dunyasha*] Go away, Dunyasha. [*To Yepikhodoff*] You play billiards and break a cue, and stroll about the drawing-room as if you were a visitor!

YEPIKHODOFF. You cannot, if I may say so, call me to order.

VARYA. I'm not calling you to order, I'm only telling you. You just walk about from place to place and never do your work. Goodness only knows why we keep a clerk.

YEPIKHODOFF [*offended*] Whether I work, or walk about, or eat, or play billiards, is only a matter to be settled by people of understanding and my elders.

VARYA. You dare talk to me like that! [*Furious*]

You dare? You mean to insinuate that I know nothing? Go away! This minute!

YEPIKHODOFF [*nervous*] I must ask you to express yourself more delicately.

VARYA [*beside herself*] Get out this minute. Get out! [*He goes to the door, she follows*] Two-and-twenty troubles! Not another sign of you here! I don't wish to set eyes on you again! [*Yepikhodoff has gone out; his voice can be heard outside: "I'll make a complaint against you"*] What, coming back? [*Snatches up the stick left by Firce near the door*] Go . . . go . . . go, I'll show you . . . Are you going? Are you going? Well, then take that. [*She lashes out with the stick as Lopakhin enters.*]

LOPAKHIN. Much obliged.

VARYA [*angry but amused*] I'm sorry.

LOPAKHIN. Never mind. I thank you for the pleasant reception you gave me!

VARYA. It isn't worthy of thanks. [*Walks away, then looks back and asks gently*] I didn't hurt you, did I?

LOPAKHIN. No, not at all. There'll be a huge bump, no more.

VOICES FROM THE DRAWING-ROOM. Lopakhin's returned! Yermolai Alexeievitch!

PISHCHIK. Now we'll see what there is to see and hear what there is to hear. . . . [*Kisses Lopakhin*]

You smell of brandy, my dashing soul. And we're all enjoying ourselves.

[*Enter Liuboff Andreievna.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Is that you, Yermolai Alexeievitch? Why were you so long? Where's Leonid?

LOPAKHIN. Leonid Andreievitch returned with me, he's coming. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*excited*] Well, what? Is it sold? Tell me?

LOPAKHIN [*confused, afraid to show his pleasure*] The sale was over at four o'clock. . . . We missed the train, and had to wait till half-past nine. [*Sighs heavily*] Ooh! My head's swimming a little.

[*Enter Gaieff; in his right hand he carries things that he has bought, with his left he dries his eyes.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Leon, what's happened? Leon, well? [*Impatiently, in tears*] Quick, for the love of God. . . .

GAIEFF [*says nothing to her, only waves his hand; to Firce, weeping*] Here, take this . . . Here are anchovies, herrings from Kertch. . . . I've had no food to-day. . . . I have had a time! [*The door from the billiard-room is open; the clicking of the balls is heard, and Yasha's voice, "Seven, eighteen!" Gaieff's expression changes, he no longer cries*] I'm awfully

tired. Let me change my clothes, Firce. [*Goes out through the drawing-room; Firce following him.*]

PISHCHIK. What happened? Come on, tell us!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Is the cherry orchard sold?

LOPAKHIN. It is sold.

LIUBOFF ANREIEVNA. Who bought it?

LOPAKHIN. I bought it. [*Pause.*]

[*Liuboff Andreievna is overwhelmed; she would fall if she were not leaning against an armchair and a table. Varya takes her keys off her belt, throws them on the floor into the middle of the room and goes out.*] I bought it! Wait, ladies and gentlemen, please, my head's going round, I can't talk. . . . [*Laughing*] When we reached the sale, Deriganoff was there already. Leonid Andreievitch had only fifteen thousand rubles, and Deriganoff offered thirty thousand on top of the mortgage to begin with. I saw how matters stood, so I went right after him and bid forty. He raised his bid to forty-five, I offered fifty-five. That means he went up by fives and I went up by tens. . . . Well, it came to an end at last, I bid ninety more than the mortgage; and it stayed with me. The cherry orchard is mine now, mine! [*Roars with laughter*] My God, my God, the cherry orchard's mine! Tell me I'm drunk, or crazy, or dreaming. . . . [*Stamps his feet*] Don't laugh at me! If my father and grandfather rose from their graves and

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THE CLIMAX OF ACT III IN TCHEHOFF'S "THE CHERRY ORCHARD," AT THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

looked at the whole affair, and saw how their Yermolai, their whipped and illiterate Yermolai, who used to run barefoot in the winter, how that very Yermolai has bought an estate, the most beautiful spot in the world! I've bought the estate where my grandfather and my father were slaves, where they weren't even allowed to enter the kitchen. I'm asleep, it's only a dream, an illusion. . . . It's the fruit of imagination, wrapped in the fog of the unknown. . . . [*Picks up the keys, gayly smiling*] She threw down the keys, she wished to show that she was no longer mistress here. . . . [*Jingles keys*] Well, it's all one! [*Hears the band tuning up*] Eh, musicians, play, I wish to hear you! Come and look at Yermolai Lopakhin swinging his ax against the cherry orchard, come and look at the trees falling! We'll build villas here, and our grandsons and great-grandsons will see a new life here. . . . Play on, music! [*The band plays. Liuboff Andreievna sinks into a chair and weeps bitterly. Lopakhin continues reproachfully*] Why then, why didn't you take my advice? My poor, dear woman, you can't go back now. [*Weeps*] Oh, if only the whole thing were finished, if only our uneven, unhappy lives were changed!

PISCHIK [*takes his arm; in an undertone*] She's crying. Let's go into the drawing-room and leave

her by herself . . . come on . . . [*Takes his arm and leads him out.*]

LOPAKHIN. What's that? Bandsmen, play up! Go on, do just as I wish you to! [*Ironically*] The new owner, the owner of the cherry orchard is coming! [*He accidentally knocks up against a little table and nearly upsets the candelabra*] I can pay for everything now! [*Exit with Pishchik.*]

[*In the reception-room and the drawing-room nobody remains except Liuboff Andreievna, who sits huddled up and weeping bitterly. The band plays softly. Anya and Trofimoff come in quickly. Anya goes up to her mother and kneels in front of her. Trofimoff stands at the drawing-room entrance.*]

ANYA. Mother! Mother, are you crying? My dear, kind, good mother, my beautiful mother, I love you! Bless you! The cherry orchard is sold. We own it no longer, it's true. But don't cry, mother, you still have your life before you, you've still your beautiful pure soul. . . . Come with me, come, dear, away from here, come! We'll plant a new orchard, more beautiful than this, and you'll see it, and you'll understand, and deep soothing joy will enfold your soul, like the evening sun, and you'll smile, mother! Come, dear, let's go!

CURTAIN.

ACT FOUR.

Same as Act I. There are no curtains on the windows, no pictures; only a few pieces of furniture are left piled up in a corner as if for sale. The emptiness is apparent. There are bags and suitcases by the door that leads out of the house and at the back of the stage. The door at the left is open; the voices of Varya and Anya can be heard through it. Lopakhin stands and waits. Yasha holds a tray with little glasses of champagne. Outside, Yepikhodoff is tying up a box. Voices are heard behind the stage. The peasants have come to say good-bye. The voice of Gaieff is heard: "Thank you, brothers, thank you."

YASHA. The peasants have come to say good-bye. I am of the opinion, Yermolai Alexeievitch, that they're good people, but they don't understand very much.

[*The voices die away. Liuboff Andreievna and Gaieff enter. She is not crying but is pale, and her face twitches; she can hardly speak.*]

GAIEFF. You gave them your purse, Liuba. You can't go on like that, you can't!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I couldn't help myself, I couldn't! [*They go out.*]

LOPAKHIN [*in the doorway, looking after them*] Please, I ask you most humbly! Just a little glass for farewell. I didn't remember to bring any from town and I found only one bottle at the station. Please, do! [*Pause*] Won't you really have any? [*Goes away from the door*] If I only knew — I wouldn't have bought any. Well, I shan't drink any, either. [*Yasha carefully puts the tray on a chair*] You have a drink, Yasha, at any rate.

YASHA. To those departing! And good luck to those who stay behind! [*Drinks*] I can assure you that this isn't real champagne.

LOPAKHIN. Eight rubles a bottle. [*Pause*] It's frightfully cold here.

YASHA. We made no fire to-day, since we're going away. [*Laughs.*]

LOPAKHIN. What's the matter with you?

YASHA. I'm happy — that's all!

LOPAKHIN. It's October, but it's as sunny and quiet as if it were summer. Good for building. [*Looking at his watch and speaking through the door*] Ladies and gentlemen, please remember that it's only forty-seven minutes till train time! You must leave for the station in twenty minutes. Hurry up.

[*Trofimoff, in an overcoat, enters from the outside.*]

TROFIMOFF. I think it's time we went. The carriages are waiting. Where the devil are my rubbers? They're lost. [*Through the door*] Anya, I can't find my rubbers! I can't!

LOPAKHIN. I have to go to Kharkoff. I'm going on the same train as you. I'm going to spend the whole winter in Kharkoff. I've been hanging around with you people. I am tired of doing nothing. I must have something to do with my hands; they seem to belong to a different person if I don't use them.

TROFIMOFF. We'll go away now and then you'll start again on your useful occupations!

LOPAKHIN. Have a glass?

TROFIMOFF. No — thanks!

LOPAKHIN. So you're off to Moscow now?

TROFIMOFF. Yes. I'll see them into town and tomorrow I'm going to Moscow.

LOPAKHIN. Yes . . . I suppose the professors aren't lecturing yet; they're waiting till you turn up!

TROFIMOFF. That does not concern you.

LOPAKHIN. How many years have you been going to the university?

TROFIMOFF. Think of something new! This is old and trite! [*Looking for his rubbers*] You know, we may not meet again, so just let me give you a

parting bit of advice: Don't wave your hands about! Get rid of that habit of waving them about. And then, building villas and reckoning on their residents becoming freeholders in time — that's the same thing; it's all a matter of waving your hands . . . I like you in spite of everything . . . You've slender, delicate fingers, like those of an artist, and you've a gentle, refined soul. . . .

LOPAKHIN [*embraces him*] Good-bye, dear fellow. Thanks for all you've said. If you need money for the journey, let me give you some.

TROFIMOFF. What for? I don't need any.

LOPAKHIN. But you've nothing!

TROFIMOFF. Yes, I have, thank you; I received some for a translation. Here it is in my pocket. [*Nervously*] But I can't find my rubbers!

VARYA [*from the other room*] Take your rubbish away! [*Throws a pair of rubbers on stage.*]

TROFIMOFF. Why are you angry, Varya? H'm! These aren't my rubbers!

LOPAKHIN. In the spring I sowed three thousand acres of poppies, and now I've netted forty thousand rubles profit. And when my poppies were in bloom, what a picture it was! So, as I was saying, I made forty thousand rubles, and I mean I'd like to lend you some, because I can afford it. Why turn up your nose at it? I'm just a simple peasant. . . .

TROFIMOFF. Your father was a peasant, mine was a druggist, and that means nothing at all. [*Lopakhin takes out his pocketbook*] No, no . . . Even if you gave me twenty thousand I should refuse. I'm a free man. And everything that rich and poor alike value so highly carries no more weight with me than thistledown in a wind. I can do without you, I can pass you by. I'm strong and proud. Mankind goes on to the highest possible truths and happiness on earth, and I march in the front ranks!

LOPAKHIN. Will you reach there?

TROFIMOFF. I shall! [*Pause*] I'll reach there and show the way to others. [*Axes cutting the trees are heard in the distance.*]

LOPAKHIN. Well, good-bye, old man. It's time to go. Here we stand pulling one another's noses, but life goes its own way all the while. When I work for a long stretch tirelessly, my thoughts become clearer and it seems to me that I understand the reasons for existence. But think, brother, how many people live in Russia without knowing why — ? But all this is beside the point. Leonid Andreievitch, they say, has accepted a post in a bank; he will get six thousand rubles a year . . . But he won't stand it; he's very lazy.

ANYA [*at the door*] Mother asks if you will stop

them cutting down the orchard until she has gone away.

TROFIMOFF. Yes, really, you ought to have enough tact not to do that. [*Exit.*]

LOPAKHIN. All right, all right . . . What funny people! [*Exit.*]

ANYA. Has Firce been sent to the hospital?

YASHA. I gave the order this morning. I suppose they've sent him.

ANYA [*to Yepikhodoff, who crosses the room*] Semyon Panteleievitch, please make inquiries if Firce has been sent to the hospital.

YASHA [*offended*] I told Yegor this morning. What's the use of asking ten times?

YEPIKHODOFF. That old Firce, in my conclusive opinion, isn't worth mending; he had better join his ancestors. I only envy him. [*Puts a trunk on a hat-box and squashes it*] Well, of course. I thought so! [*Exit.*]

YASHA [*grinning*] Two-and-twenty troubles.

VARYA [*behind the door*] Has Firce been taken away to the hospital?

ANYA. Yes.

VARYA. Why didn't they take the letter to the doctor?

ANYA. It'll have to be sent after him. [*Exit.*]

VARYA [*in the next room*] Where's Yasha? Tell

him his mother has come and wishes to say good-bye to him.

YASHA [*waving his hand*] She'll make me lose all patience!

[*Dunyasha meanwhile has been busying herself with the bags; now that Yasha is left alone, she goes to him.*]

DUNYASHA. If you would only look at me once, Yasha. You're going away, leaving me behind . . . [*Weeps and hugs him.*]

YASHA. What's the use of crying? [*Drinks champagne*] In six days I'll be back again in Paris. To-morrow we get into the express and off we go. I can hardly believe it. Vive la France! It doesn't suit me here, I can't live here . . . it's no good. Well, I've seen the uncivilized world; I have had enough of it. [*Drinks champagne*] What are you crying for? Behave decently and then you'll have no cause for tears!

DUNYASHA [*powders herself, looking in the mirror*] Write me from Paris! I loved you so much, Yasha, so much! I am a delicate girl, Yasha.

YASHA. Somebody's coming.

[*He bustles around the baggage, singing softly. Enter Liuboff Andreievna, Gaieff, Anya, and Charlotta Ivanovna.*]

GAIEFF. We'd better be off. There's no time to

lose. [*Looks at Yasha*] Somebody smells of herring!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We needn't get into our carriages for ten minutes. [*Looks round the room*] Good-bye, dear house, old grandfather. The winter will pass, the spring will come, and then you'll be here no more. You'll be pulled down. How much these walls have seen! [*Passionately kisses her daughter*] My treasure, you're radiant, your eyes flash like two jewels! Are you happy? Very?

ANYA. Very! A new life is beginning, mother!

GAIEFF [*gayly*] Yes, really, everything's all right now. Before the cherry orchard was sold we all were excited and worried, and then, when the question was solved once and for all, we all calmed down, and even became cheerful. I'm a bank official now, and a financier . . . red in the center; and you Liuba, look better for some reason or other, there's no doubt about it.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Yes. My nerves are better, it's true. [*She puts on her coat and hat*] I sleep well. Take my baggage out, Yasha. It's time. [*To Anya*] My little girl, we'll soon see each other again . . . I'm off to Paris. I'll live there on the money your grandmother from Yaroslavl sent to buy the estate — bless her! — though it won't last long.

ANYA. You'll come back soon, soon, mother, won't you? I'll get ready, and pass the examination at the

High School, and then I'll work and help you. We'll read all sorts of books together, won't we? [*Kisses her mother's hands*] We'll read in the autumn evenings; we'll read many books, and a beautiful new world will open up before us . . . [*Thoughtfully*] You'll come, mother. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'll come, my darling. [*Embraces her.*]

[*Enter Lopakhin. Charlotta is singing to herself.*]

GAIEFF. Charlotta is happy; she's singing!

CHARLOTTA [*takes a bundle, looking like a wrapped-up baby*] My little baby, bye-bye. [*The baby seems to answer, "Oua, oua!"*] Hush, my nice little boy. [*"Oua! Oua!"*] I'm so sorry for you! [*Throws the bundle back*] So please find me a new place. I can't go on like this.

LOPAKHIN. We'll find one, Charlotta Ivanovna, don't you be afraid.

GAIEFF. Everybody's leaving us. Varya's going away . . . we've suddenly become unnecessary.

CHARLOTTA. I've nowhere to live in town. I must go away. [*Hums*] Never mind.

[*Enter Pishchik.*]

LOPAKHIN. The miracle of nature!

PISHCHIK [*puffing*] Oh, let me get my breath again. I'm fagged . . . My honorable friends, give me some water . . .

GAIEFF. Come for money did you? I'm your humble servant, and I'm going out of the way of temptation. [*Exit.*]

PISHCHIK. I haven't been here for ever so long . . . dear madam. [*To Lopakhin*] You here? Glad to see you . . . man of tremendous brain . . . take this . . . take it . . . [*Gives Lopakhin money*] Four hundred rubles . . . that leaves 841 —

LOPAKHIN [*shrugs his shoulders in surprise*] It's like a dream. Where did you get this?

PISHCHIK. Stop . . . it's hot . . . A most unexpected thing happened. A group of Englishmen came along and found some white clay on my land. . . . [*To Liuboff Andreievna*] And here's four hundred for you . . . beautiful lady . . . [*Gives her money*] Give you the rest later . . . [*Drinks water*] Just now a young man in the train was saying that some great philosopher advises us all to jump from the roofs. "Jump!" he says, and that's all. [*Astonished*] Just imagine! More water!

LOPAKHIN. Who were these Englishmen?

PISHCHIK. I've leased the land with the clay to them for twenty-four years . . . Now, excuse me, I've no time. I must hurry or — I'll go to Gnoikoff — to Kardamanoff — I owe everybody — [*Drinks*] Good-bye — I'll drop in Thursday.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We're just starting off to town, and to-morrow I go abroad.

PISHCHIK [*agitated*] What? Why to town? I see furniture . . . trunks . . . Well, never mind. [*Crying*] Never mind. These Englishmen are men of tremendous intellect . . . Never mind . . . Be happy . . . God will help you . . . Never mind . . . Everything in this world comes to an end . . . [*Kisses Liuboff Andreievna's hand*] And if you should happen to hear that my end has come, just remember this old . . . horse and say: "There used to be a certain fellow called Semyonoff-Pishchik, God bless his soul. . . ." Wonderful weather . . . yes . . . [*Exit deeply moved, but returns at once and says in the door*] Dashenka sent her love! [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Now we can go. I've two worries, though. The first is poor Firce. [*Looks at her watch*] We've still five minutes . . .

ANYA. Mother, Firce has already been sent to the hospital. Yasha sent him off this morning.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. The second is Varya. She's used to getting up early and to work, and now she has no work to do, she's like a fish out of water. She's grown thin and pale, and she cries, poor thing. . . . [*Pause*] You know very well, Yermolai Alexeievitch, that I hoped formerly to marry her to you, and I suppose you are going to marry somebody? [*Whis-*

pers to Anya, who nods to Charlotta, and they both go out] She loves you, she's your sort, and I don't understand, I really don't, why you seem to be keeping away from each other. I don't understand!

LOPAKHIN. To tell the truth, I don't understand it myself. It's all so strange. . . . If there's still time, I'll be ready at once. Let's get it over, once and for all; I don't feel as if I could ever propose to her without you.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Excellent. It'll take only a minute. I'll call her.

LOPAKHIN. The champagne comes in very handy. [*Looking at the glass*] They're empty, somebody's drunk them already. [*Yasha coughs*] I call that licking it up. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*animated*] Excellent. We'll go out. Yasha, *allez*. I'll call her . . . [*At the door*] Varya, leave that and come here. Come! [*Exit with Yasha.*]

LOPAKHIN [*looks at his watch*] Yes . . . [*Pause.*]

[*There is a restrained laugh behind the door, a whisper, then Varya comes in. She examines the luggage at length.*]

VARYA. I can't seem to find it . . .

LOPAKHIN. What are you looking for?

VARYA. I packed it myself and I don't remember. [*Pause.*]

LOPAKHIN. Where are you going now, Varvara Mikhailovna?

VARYA. I? To the Ragulins . . . I've accepted a position, to look after their household . . . housekeeper or something.

LOPAKHIN. Is that at Yashnevo? It's about fifty miles. [*Pause*] So life in this house is finished now. . . .

VARYA [*looking at the baggage*] Where is it? . . . perhaps I've put it away in the trunk . . . Yes, there'll be no more life in this house . . .

LOPAKHIN. And I'm off to Kharkoff at once . . . by this train. I've a lot of business on hand. I'm leaving Yepikhodoff here . . . I've hired him.

VARYA. Well, well!

LOPAKHIN. Last year at this time the snow was already falling, if you remember, and now it's nice and sunny. Only it's rather cold . . . There's three degrees of frost.

VARYA. I didn't look. [*Pause*] And our thermometer's broken. . . . [*Pause.*]

VOICE AT THE DOOR. Yermolai Alexeievitch!

LOPAKHIN [*as if he has long been waiting to be called*] Just a minute.

[*Exit quickly. Varya, sitting on the floor, puts her face against a bundle of clothes and weeps gently.*

The door opens. Liuboff Andreievna enters carefully.]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Well? [*Pause*] We must go.

VARYA [*not crying now, wipes her eyes*] Yes, it's quite time, dear mother. I'll get to the Ragulins today, if I don't miss the train. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*at the door*] Anya, put on your things.

[*Enter Anya, then Gaieff, and Charlotta Ivanovna. Gaieff wears a warm overcoat with a cape. A servant and drivers come in. Yepikhodoff bustles around the baggage.*] Now we can go away.

ANYA [*joyfully*] Away!

GAIEFF. My friends, my dear friends! Can I be silent, in leaving this house forever? — can I restrain myself, in saying farewell, from expressing those feelings which now fill all my soul?

ANYA [*imploringly*] Uncle!

VARYA. Uncle, you shouldn't!

GAIEFF [*stupidly*] Double the red into the center . . . I'll be quiet.

[*Enter Trofimoff, then Lopakhin.*]

TROFIMOFF. Well, it's time to go!

LOPAKHIN. Yepikhodoff, my coat!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'll sit here one minute more. It's as if I'd never really noticed what the

walls and ceilings of this house were like, and now I look at them greedily, with such tender love. . . .

GAIEFF. I remember, when I was six years old, on Trinity Sunday, I sat at this window and looked and watched my father go to church. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Have all the things been taken away?

LOPAKHIN. Yes, all, I think. [*To Yepikhodoff, putting on his coat*] You see that everything's quite straight, Yepikhodoff.

YEPIKHODOFF [*hoarsely*] You may depend upon me, Yermolai Alexeievitch!

LOPAKHIN. What's the matter with your voice?

YEPIKHODOFF. I swallowed something just now; I was taking a drink of water.

YASHA [*suspiciously*] What manners . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We go away, and not a soul remains behind.

LOPAKHIN. Till the spring.

VARYA [*drags an umbrella out of a bundle, and seems to be waving it about. Lopakhin appears to be frightened*] What are you doing? . . . I never thought . . .

TROFIMOFF. Come along, let's take our seats . . . it's time! The train will be in presently.

VARYA. Peter, here they are, your rubbers, by

that trunk. [*In tears*] And how old and dirty they are . . .

TROFIMOFF [*putting them on*] Come on!

GAIEFF [*deeply moved, nearly crying*] The train . . . the station . . . Cross in the center, a white double in the corner. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Let's go!

LOPAKHIN. Are you all here? There's nobody else? [*Locks the side-door on the left*] There's a lot of things in there. I must lock them up. Come!

ANYA. Good-bye, home! Good-bye, old life!

TROFIMOFF. Welcome, new life.

[*Exit with Anya. Varya looks round the room and goes out slowly. Yasha and Charlotta, with her little dog, go out.*]

LOPAKHIN. Till the spring then! Come on . . . till we meet again! [*Exit.*]

[*Liuboff Andreievna and Gaieff are left alone. They seem to have been waiting for this moment. They fall into each other's arms and sob restrainedly and quietly, fearing that somebody might hear them.*]

GAIEFF [*in despair*] My sister, my sister . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. My dear, my gentle, beautiful orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, good-bye! Good-bye!

ANYA'S VOICE [*gayly*] Mother!

TROFIMOFF'S VOICE [*gayly, excited*] Coo-ee!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. To look at the walls and the windows for the last time . . . My late mother used to like to walk about this room . . .

GAIEFF. My sister, my sister!

ANYA'S VOICE. Mother!

TROFIMOFF'S VOICE. Coo-ee!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We're coming!

[*They go out. The stage is empty. The sound of keys turned in the locks is heard, and then the noise of the carriages driving off. It is quiet. Then the sound of an ax against the trees is heard in the silence sadly and staccato. Footsteps are heard. Firce comes in from the door on the right. He is dressed as usual, in a short jacket and white vest, with slippers on his feet. He is ill. He goes to the door and tries the handle.*]

FIRCE. It's locked. They've left. [*Sits on sofa*] They've forgotten me. . . . Never mind, I'll sit here . . . And Leonid Andreievitch has probably gone in a light overcoat instead of putting on his fur coat . . . [*Sighs anxiously*] I didn't see. . . . Oh, these young people! [*Mumbles something unintelligible*] Life's gone on as if I'd never lived. [*Lying down*] I'll lie down. . . . You've no strength left in you, nothing left at all. . . . Oh, you . . . bungler!

[*He lies motionless. The distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, of a string breaking, dying away morosely. Silence follows it, and only the sound somewhere in the distance, of the ax falling on the trees, is audible.*]

CURTAIN.

THE THREE SISTERS

BY

ANTON TCHEKHOFF

INTRODUCTION

Like "The Cherry Orchard," which it preceded to the stage by three years, Anton Tchekhoff's "The Three Sisters" is a veracious and illuminating cross section of Russian life among the provincial intelligentsia prior to the Revolution of 1905. Traces of this dull, drab, monotonous existence, in which smoldering passion flares up fitfully, survived that upheaval and as before became one of the causes of the contemporary Revolution. Apparently, that life is obliterated to-day, and so even if "The Three Sisters" had no compelling human appeal, it would be invaluable as an artist's eye-witness account of a departed epoch.

But it has a compelling human appeal, with its recurrent refrain of pensive ambition thwarted at every turn, and thwarted, too, by characteristics existing alongside the ambition rather than by outside influences.

That appeal will be apparent to the reader and in highly intensified degree to the spectator of the Moscow Art Theatre's searchingly intimate interpretation of the play. It is interesting to recount here the human side of the composition and production of "The Three Sisters."

This deeply moving drama of suppressed longings was the first of Tchekhoff's plays to be written expressly for the theatre which had found its own function through opening for him a channel on the Russian stage. "The Sea-Gull" had merely been rescued from previous failure in Petrograd. "Uncle Vanya" had been snatched by Stanislavsky from timid and over-fastidious hands at the Small Imperial Theatre. "The Three Sisters," on the other hand, was composed with Stanislavsky and his artists particularly in mind as its interpreters, but only after extraordinary proof to the playwright that the Moscow Art Theatre was his legitimate outlet.

Ill health had kept Tchekhoff in the Crimea, pre-

venting him from seeing the Art Theatre's productions of "The Sea-Gull" and "Uncle Vanya." He only half-believed the rumors of their success. To convince him, therefore, and to elicit the desired new manuscript, the entire company journeyed southward at the close of the Moscow season in the spring of 1900 and gave special performances in Sevastopol and Yalta for Tchekhoff's benefit.

"The Three Sisters" was written at Yalta in the summer of 1900, rewritten in Moscow in early autumn, read to the actors for the first time in the presence of the author, placed in rehearsal and produced February 13 (our calendar), 1901. During rehearsals, Tchekhoff fled with misgivings to Nice and as the date of the premiere approached, he concealed his whereabouts in Naples, without the faintest hope that the play would achieve the success it did.

Still, to this period belongs the most intimate relationship achieved between playhouse and playwright. Tchekhoff's advice was sought and given on matters pertaining to the rest of the repertory. And it was at this time that the company's leading actress, Mme. Knipper, became his wife.

Some one has said that in his methods as a producer, Stanislavsky has heeded the dicta of Diderot: "No emotion can be interpreted with success except in a moderate and chastened form"; and "Restraint is essential in all artistic interpretation." Restraint, minimization, the loosening of the tension and the sharpening of the attention — these, assuredly, are the secrets not only of the producer of "The Three Sisters" but of its author, as well.

It is significant to note in conclusion that to-day, twenty-two years after its first performance, five of the most important rôles in "The Three Sisters" are still played by the same actors who originally embodied them and found their inspiration in the unobtrusive but penetrating guidance of the playwright himself.

THE EDITOR.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

ANDREI SERGEIEVITCH PROZOROFF.

NATALIA IVANOVNA (NATASHA) —
His fiancée, later his wife.

OLGA
MASHA } *His sisters.*
IRINA

FYODOR ILYITCH KULIGIN —
High school teacher; married to Masha.

ALEXANDER IGNATEIEVITCH VERSHININ —
Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of a battery.

NIKOLAI LVOVITCH TUZENBACH —
Baron, Lieutenant in the army.

VASSILY VASSILIEVITCH SOLYONY — *Captain.*

IVAN ROMANOVITCH TCHEBUTIKIN — *Army doctor.*

ALEXEI PETROVITCH FEDOTIK — *Second lieutenant.*

VLADIMIR CARLOVITCH RODE — *Second lientenant.*

FERAPONT —
Door-keeper at local council offices, an old man.

ANFISA — *Nurse.*

The action takes place in a provincial town.

ACT ONE.

In Prozoroff's home. A sitting-room with pillars; behind is seen a large living-room. It is midday, outside the sun is shining brightly. In the living-room the table is being laid for lunch.

Olga, in the regulation blue dress of a teacher at a girl's high school, is walking about correcting exercise books; Masha, in a black dress, her hat in her lap, sits and reads a book; Irina, in white, stands at one side, deep in thought.

OLGA. Father died just a year ago, on the fifth of May, your birthday, Irina. It was very cold and it snowed. I thought I would never survive it, and you fainted dead away. Now a year has gone by and we are already thinking of it without pain, and you are dressed in white and you seem cheerful. [*Clock strikes twelve*] And the clock struck just the same way then. [*Pause*] I remember that there was music at the funeral, and they fired a volley across the grave. He was a Brigadier-General yet there were few people present. Of course, it was raining, raining hard, and snowing.

IRINA. Why recall it?

[*Baron Tuzenbach, Tchebutikin and Solyony appear by the table in the living-room, behind the pillars*]

OLGA. It's so warm to-day that we can keep the windows open, though the birch trees are not yet in flower. Father was put in command of a brigade, and he left

Moscow with us eleven years ago. I remember perfectly that it was early May and everything in Moscow was in bloom. It was warm, too, everything was bathed in sunshine. Eleven years have gone, and I remember everything as if it were only yesterday. Oh, God! This morning when I awakened and saw the glorious sunshine and the budding spring, my heart filled with joy, and I longed so much to go home.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Will you bet on it?

TUZENBACH. Oh, nonsense.

[*Masha, lost in reverie over her book, whistles softly*]

OLGA. Don't whistle, Masha. How can you! [*Pause*] With teaching High School every day and giving lessons every evening, I have headaches all the time. Strange thoughts come to me, as if I were already an old woman. And really, during the four years that I have been working here, I have felt as if every day my strength and youth were being squeezed out of me, drop by drop. And only one desire grows and gains in strength. . . .

IRINA. To go to Moscow. To sell the house, leave everything here, and go to Moscow . . .

OLGA. Yes! To Moscow, and as soon as possible.

[*Tchebutikin and Tuzenbach laugh*]

IRINA. I expect brother will become a professor, but still, he won't wish to live here. Poor Masha is the only drawback.

OLGA. Masha will come to Moscow every year, for the whole summer.

[*Masha is whistling gently*]

IRINA. God willing, everything will be arranged.

[*Looks out of the window*] It's nice out to-day. I don't know why I'm so gay. I remembered this morning it was my birthday, and suddenly I felt so happy and thought of my childhood days, when mother was still with us. What glorious thoughts I had, what thoughts!

OLGA. You're all radiance to-day, I've never seen you look so lovely. And Masha is pretty, too. Andrei wouldn't be bad-looking, if he hadn't taken on so much weight; it does spoil his appearance. But I've grown old and very thin; I suppose it's because I get angry with the girls at school. To-day I'm free. I'm at home. I haven't a headache, and I feel younger than I did yesterday. I'm only twenty-eight. . . . All's well, God is everywhere, but it seems to me that if only I were married and could stay at home all day, it would be even better. [*Pause*] I would love my husband.

TUZENBACH [*to Solyony*] I'm tired of listening to your rot. [*Entering the sitting-room*] I forgot to say that Vershinin, our new Lieutenant-Colonel of artillery, is coming to see us to-day. [*Sits down at the piano*]

OLGA. Well — I'm very glad.

IRINA. Is he old?

TUZENBACH. Not very. Forty or forty-five, at the most. [*Plays softly*] He seems rather a good sort. He's certainly no fool, only he likes to hear himself talk.

IRINA. Is he interesting?

TUZENBACH. Oh, he's all right, but there's his wife, his mother-in-law, and two daughters. This is his second wife. He pays visits and tells everybody that he has a wife and two daughters. He'll tell you so, too, when he

comes here. His wife is half-witted, she wears her hair in a braid down her back and talks a blue streak. She philosophizes, and tries to commit suicide frequently, apparently in order to annoy her husband. In his place I would have left her long ago, but he bears up patiently, and only complains.

SOLYONY [*enters with Tchebutikin from the living-room*] With one hand I can lift only fifty-four pounds, but with both hands I can lift 180, or even 200. From this I conclude that two men are not twice as strong as one, but three times, perhaps even more. . . .

TCHEBUTIKIN [*reads a newspaper as he walks*] If your hair is coming out . . . take an ounce of naphthaline and half a bottle of alcohol . . . dissolve and use daily. . . . [*Makes a note in his pocket diary*] I'll make a note of it! [*To Solyony*] Listen. You cork the bottle well, push a glass tube through the cork. . . . Then you take a small quantity of . . .

IRINA. Ivan Romanovitch, dear Ivan Romanovitch!

TCHEBUTIKIN. Well, what is it, my dear little girl?

IRINA. Why am I so happy to-day? I feel as if I were sailing under a great blue sky with huge white birds around me. Why is that? Why?

TCHEBUTIKIN [*kisses her hands, tenderly*] My white bird. . . .

IRINA. When I awoke this morning and got up and washed, everything was like an open book to me, and I seemed to grasp the meaning of life. Dear Ivan Romanovitch, I understand everything. Every one must toil in the sweat of his brow, whoever he may be. In this alone

is the aim and object of his life, his happiness, his ambition. How splendid it is to be a workman who gets up at daybreak and breaks stones in the street, or a shepherd, or a schoolmaster, who teaches children, or a railroad mechanic. . . . My God, if I can't be a man who works, I would rather be an ox, or a horse, or any work animal, than a young woman who wakes up at twelve o'clock, has her coffee in bed, and then spends two hours dressing. . . . Oh, it's awful! Sometimes I crave work as a thirsty man craves water on a hot day. And if I don't get up early in the future and work, Ivan Romanovitch, then you may refuse me your friendship.

TCHEBUTIKIN [*tenderly*] I agree, I agree. . . .

OLGA. Father used to make us get up at seven. Now Irina wakes at seven and lies and meditates about something till nine at least. And she looks so serious! [*Laughs*]

IRINA. You're so used to me as a little girl that it seems queer to you that I should ever be serious. I'm twenty!

TUZENBACH. I can understand that craving for work. God! I've never worked in my life. I was born in chilly, lazy Petersburg, of a family that never needed to work nor ever had to worry. I remember when I came home from my regiment, a footman had to pull off my boots while I fidgeted and my mother gazed at me in adoration and wondered when others looked on disapprovingly. They shielded me from work; they almost succeeded, almost! The day of reckoning is here. Something formidable is threatening us; a strong, cleansing storm is gather-

ing; it is coming nearer and nearer; it will soon sweep our world clean of laziness, indifference, prejudice against work, and wretched boredom. I shall soon work, and within twenty-five or thirty years, every one will work! Every one!

TCHEBUTIKIN. I shan't work.

TUZENBACH. You do not matter.

SOLYONY. In twenty-five years' time, we shall all be dead, thank the Lord. In two or three years a stroke will carry you off, or else I'll grow impatient and blow your brains out, my angel.

[*Takes a scent-bottle out of his pocket and sprays his chest and hands*]

TCHEBUTIKIN [*laughs*] It's quite true, I have never done anything in my life. After I left the university I never moved a finger or opened a book, I just read the papers. . . . [*Takes another newspaper out of his pocket*] Here we are. . . . According to the papers there used to be a writer, named Dobroluboff, but what he wrote — I don't know . . . God only knows . . . [*Rapping is heard from the floor below*] There. . . . They're calling me downstairs, somebody's come to see me. I'll be back in a minute . . . won't be long . . . [*Exit hurriedly, scratching his beard*]

IRINA. He's up to something.

TUZENBACH. Yes, he looked so pleased as he went out that I'm pretty certain he'll bring you a present in a moment.

IRINA. How unpleasant!

OLGA. Yes, it's awful. He's always doing silly things

MASHA. "A green oak stands by the sea.
A chain of gold around it . . .
A chain of gold around it . . ."

[*Masha rises and hums softly*]

OLGA. You're not very cheerful to-day, Masha. [*Masha hums, putting on her hat*] Where are you off to?

MASHA. Home.

IRINA. That's odd. . . .

TUZENBACH. Leaving the birthday party?

MASHA. It doesn't matter. I'll come back in the evening. Good-bye, dear. [*Kisses Irina*] Once more let me wish you many happy returns! In the old days when father was alive, every time we had a birthday, thirty or forty officers used to come, and there was plenty of noise and fun, and to-day there's only a man and a half, and it's as quiet as the grave. I'm off . . . I'm out of sorts to-day, and gloomy, so don't you mind me. [*Laughs through her tears*] We'll talk later on. Good-by for the present, my dear; I'll go somewhere.

IRINA [*displeased*] You are queer. . . .

OLGA [*crying*] I understand you, Masha.

SOLYONY. When a man talks philosophy, well, it is philosophy or at any rate sophistry; but when a woman, or two women, talk philosophy — it's all nonsense.

MASHA. What do you mean by that, you awful creature?

SOLYONY. Oh, nothing. You jump on me before I can say Booh! [*Pause.*]

MASHA [*angrily, to Olga*] Stop bawling!

[*Enter Anfisa and Ferapont with a cake*]

ANFISA. This way, my dear. Come in, your feet are clean. [*To Irina*] The District Council, from Mikhail Ivanitch Protopopoff sends this cake.

IRINA. Thank you. Please thank him. [*Takes the cake*]

FERAPONT. What?

IRINA [*louder*] Please thank him.

OLGA. Give him some pie, nurse. Ferapont, go, you'll get some pie.

FERAPONT. What?

ANFISA. Come on, grand-dad, Ferapont Spiridonitch. Come on. [*Exeunt*]

MASHA. I don't like this Mikhail Potapitch or Ivanitch, Protopopoff. We should not invite him here.

IRINA. I never asked him.

MASHA. That's right.

[*Enter Tchebutikin followed by a soldier carrying a silver samovar; there are exclamations of astonishment and dissatisfaction*]

OLGA [*covers her face with her hands*] A samovar! That's terrible! [*Exit into the living-room, walks up to table*]

IRINA. My dear Ivan Romanovitch, what are you doing!

TUZENBACH [*laughs*] I told you so!

MASHA. Ivan Romanovitch, you are absolutely shameless!

TCHEBUTIKIN. My dear ones, you are all I have, everything I care for in all the world. I'll soon be sixty.

I'm an old man, a lonely insignificant old man. The one good thing about me is my love for you, and if it hadn't been for that, I would have died long ago. . . . [*To Irina*] My dear little girl, I've known you since you were born, I've carried you in my arms. . . . I loved your dead mother. . . .

MASHA. But why such expensive presents?

TCHEBUTIKIN [*angrily, through his tears*] Expensive presents . . . You should be scolded! . . . [*To the orderly*] Take the samovar in there . . . [*teasing*] Expensive presents!

[*The Orderly goes into the living-room with the samovar*]

ANFISA [*enters and crosses stage*] My dear, a strange Colonel is calling! He's taken off his coat already, children, he's coming in here. Irina darling, you'll be a nice and polite little girl, won't you? . . . [*Going into living-room*] It's long past the lunch hour. . . . Oh Lord . . . [*Exit*]

TUZENBACH. It must be Vershinin. [*Enter Vershinin*] Lieutenant-Colonel Vershinin!

VERSHININ [*to Masha and Irina*] I have the honor of introducing myself, my name is Vershinin. I am very glad that I've met you at last. Why — you are grown up! Dear! Dear!

IRINA. Please sit down. We're very glad you came.

VERSHININ [*gayly*] I am glad, so very glad! But there are three sisters, surely. I remember — three little girls. I forget your faces, but your father, Colonel Prozoroff, used to have three little girls; I remember that

perfectly; I saw them with my own eyes. How time does fly! Oh, dear, how it does fly!

TUZENBACH. Alexander Ignateievitch comes from Moscow.

IRINA. From Moscow? Are you from Moscow?

VERSHININ. Yes, from Moscow. Your late father used to command a battery there, and I was an officer in the same brigade. [*To Masha*] I seem to remember your face a little.

MASHA. I don't remember you.

IRINA. Olga! Olga! [*Shouts into the living-room*] Olga! Come here! [*Olga enters from living-room*] Lieutenant-Colonel Vershinin comes from Moscow, it appears.

VERSHININ. You are doubtless Olga Sergeievna, the eldest, and you are Maria . . . and you Irina, the youngest. . . .

OLGA. So you come from Moscow?

VERSHININ. Yes. I went to school in Moscow and entered the army there; I served there for a long time until at last I got my battery and was transferred here, as you see. I don't really remember you, I only remember that there were three sisters. I have a vivid recollection of your father. I have only to shut my eyes to see him as if he were alive. I used to visit your house in Moscow. . . .

OLGA. I always thought I remembered everybody, but . . .

VERSHININ. My name is Alexander Ignateievitch.

ACT I OF TCHEHOFF'S "THREE SISTERS," AT THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

IRINA. Alexander Ignateievitch, you've come from Moscow. What a surprise!

OLGA. We are going there, to live, you see.

IRINA. We expect to be there by autumn. It's our native town; we were born there, in Old Basmanny Street . . . [*They both laugh gayly*]

MASHA. We've unexpectedly met a fellow townsman. [*Briskly*] I remember now: Do you remember, Olga, they used to speak at home of a "lovelorn Major." You were only a Lieutenant then, and in love with somebody, but for some reason they always called you a Major in fun.

VERSHININ [*laughs*] That's it . . . the lovelorn Major, that's it!

MASHA. You wore only mustaches then. You have grown older! [*Through her tears*] How you have grown older!

VERSHININ. Yes, when they used to call me the lovelorn Major, I was young and in love. I've grown out of both now.

OLGA. But you haven't a single white hair. You're older, but you're not yet old.

VERSHININ. Still, I'm forty-two. Have you been away from Moscow long?

IRINA. Eleven years. What are you crying for, Masha, you little fool . . . [*Crying*] And I'm crying, too.

MASHA. It's all right. And where did you live?

VERSHININ. In Old Basmanny Street.

OLGA. So did we.

VERSHININ. Once I lived in Niemetskaya Street. That was when the Red Barracks were my headquarters. There's a gloomy bridge in between with the water rushing below. One grows melancholy when one is alone there. [*Pause*] Here the river is so wide and fine! It's a splendid river!

OLGA. Yes, but it's so cold. It's very cold here, and the mosquitoes ——

VERSHININ. What are you saying! Here you have such a fine healthy Russian climate. You've a forest, a river . . . and birches. Dear, modest birches, I like them more than any other tree. It's good to live here. Only it's odd that the railway station should be thirteen miles away. . . . Nobody knows why.

SOLYONY. I know why. [*All look at him*] Because if it was near it wouldn't be far off, and if it's far off, it can't be near.

[*An awkward pause*]

TUZENBACH. Vassily Vassilievitch — he is always jesting!

OLGA. Now I know who you are. I remember.

VERSHININ. I used to know your mother.

TCHEBUTIKIN. She was a good woman, God rest her soul.

IRINA. Mother is buried in Moscow.

OLGA. At the Novo-Devitsky Cemetery.

MASHA. Imagine, I'm beginning to forget her face. We'll be forgotten the same way — forgotten!

VERSHININ. Yes, forgotten! It's our fate, it can't be helped. The time will come when everything that

seems serious, significant, or very important to us will be forgotten, or considered trivial. [*Pause*] And the curious thing is that we can't possibly find out what will come to be regarded as great and important, and what will be worthless or ridiculous. Didn't the discoveries of Copernicus, or Columbus, say, seem unnecessary and ludicrous at first, while rubbish written by a fool was considered the whole truth? And it may happen that our present mode of life with which we are so satisfied, will in time appear strange, inconvenient, stupid, unclean, perhaps even sinful. . . .

TUZENBACH. Who knows? But, on the other hand, they may call our life noble and honor its memory. We've abolished torture and capital punishment, we live in security, but how much suffering there is still!

SOLYONY [*in a feeble voice*] There, there. . . . The Baron will go without his dinner if you only let him talk philosophy.

TUZENBACH. Vassily Vassilievitch, please leave me alone. [*Takes another chair*] This is a bore, you know.

SOLYONY [*feebly*] There, there, there.

TUZENBACH [*to Vershinin*] The amount of suffering we see to-day — there is so much of it! — shows that society has already reached a specific moral improvement.

VERSHININ. Yes, yes, of course.

TCHEBUTIKIN. You said just now, Baron, that they may call our life noble; but we are very petty. . . . [*Stands up*] See how small I am. But I can console myself by saying that my life is noble and lofty. [*Violin played back stage*]

MASHA. That's Andrei playing — our brother.

IRINA. He's a cultured man. I expect he will be a professor some day. Father was a soldier, but his son chose an academic career.

MASHA. That was father's wish.

OLGA. We teased him to-day. We think he's a bit in love.

IRINA. With a girl in town. She will probably be here to-day.

MASHA. You should see the way she dresses! Quite prettily, quite fashionably, too, but so unbecomingly! Some queer bright yellow skirt with a wretched little fringe and a red bodice. And her cheeks look so washed out, so washed out! Andrei isn't in love; I can't believe it. After all, he has taste! He's simply making fun of us. I heard yesterday that she was going to marry Protopopoff, the chairman of the Local Council. That would do her nicely. . . . [*At the side door*] Andrei, come here! Just for a minute, dear!

[*Enter Andrei*]

OLGA. My brother, Andrei Sergeievitch.

VERSHININ. My name is Vershinin.

ANDREI. Mine is Prozoroff. [*Wipes his perspiring face*] You've come to take charge of the battery?

OLGA. Just think, Alexander Ignateievitch comes from Moscow.

ANDREI. That's all right. Now my little sisters won't give you any rest.

VERSHININ. I've already managed to bore them.

IRINA. Just look what a nice little picture frame

Andrei gave me to-day. [*Shows it*] He made it himself.

VERSHININ [*looks at the frame and does not know what to say*] Yes. . . . It's a thing that . . .

IRINA. And he made that frame over there, on the piano as well. [*Andrei waves his hand and walks away*]

OLGA. He has a degree, plays the violin, carves all sorts of things out of wood, and is really a jack-of-all-trades. Don't go away, Andrei! He's got into a habit of always going away. Come here!

[*Masha and Irina take his arms and laughingly lead him back*]

MASHA. Come, come!

ANDREI. Please leave me alone.

MASHA. You are funny. Alexander Ignateievitch used to be called the lovelorn Major, but he never minded.

VERSHININ. Not the least.

MASHA. I'd like to call you the lovelorn fiddler!

IRINA. Or the lovelorn professor!

OLGA. He's in love! Little Andrei is in love!

IRINA [*applauds*] Bravo, bravo! Encore! Little Andrei is in love.

TCHEBUTIKIN [*goes up behind Andrei and puts his arms about him*] We were created for love only!

[*Roars with laughter, then sits down holding his newspaper in his hands*]

ANDREI. That's enough, quite enough. . . . [*Wipes his face*] I couldn't sleep all night and now I am not quite myself. I read until four o'clock, then tried to sleep, but nothing happened. I thought about one thing

and another, and then dawn came and the sun crept into my bedroom. This summer, while I'm here, I'd like to translate a book from the English. . . .

VERSHININ. Do you read English?

ANDREI. Yes; father, rest his soul, educated us almost violently. It may seem trivial and foolish, but it's nevertheless true, that after his death I began to fill out, and I gained a good deal of weight within the year, as if my body had been freed from some tremendous pressure. Thanks to father, my sisters and I know French, German, and English, and Irina knows Italian as well. But we paid dearly for it all!

MASHA. A knowledge of three languages is an unnecessary luxury in this town. It isn't even a luxury but a sort of superfluous thing, like a sixth finger. We know a great deal too much.

VERSHININ. Well, I say! [*Laughs*] You know a great deal too much! I don't think there can really be a town so dull and stupid as to have no room for a clever, cultured person. Let us suppose even that among the hundred thousand inhabitants of this backward and crude town, there are only three persons like yourself. It stands to reason that you won't be able to conquer that dark mob around you; little by little as you grow older you will be bound to give way and lose yourselves in this crowd of a hundred thousand human beings; their life will suck you under, but still, you won't disappear without having influenced anybody; later on, others like you will come, perhaps six of them, then twelve, and so on, until at last your sort will be in the majority.

In two or three hundred years life on this earth will be gorgeously beautiful and glorious. Mankind needs such a life, and if it is not ours to-day then we must look forward to it, wait, think, prepare for it. We must see and know more than our fathers and grandfathers saw and knew. [*Laughs*] And you complain that you know too much.

MASHA [*takes off her hat*] I'll stay to lunch.

IRINA [*sighs*] Really, all that should be written down. [*Andrei has gone out quietly*]

TUZENBACH. You say that many years later, life on this earth will be beautiful and glorious. That's true. But to take part in it now, even indirectly, we must work and make ready —

VERSHININ [*gets up*] Yes. What a lot of flowers you have. [*Looks round*] It's a beautiful apartment! I envy you! All my life I moved from one quarter to another, and they never had more than two chairs, a sofa, and a fireplace which smoked. I've never had flowers like these in my life. . . . [*Rubs his hands*] Well, well!

TUZENBACH. Yes, we must work. You are probably thinking to yourself: The German is growing sentimental. But I assure you I'm a Russian, I can't even speak German. My father belonged to the Orthodox Church. . . . [*Pause*]

VERSHININ [*walks about the stage*] I often wonder: suppose we could begin life over again, perfectly aware of our actions? Suppose we could use one life, already ended, as a sort of rough draft for another? I think

that every one of us would try, more than anything else, not to repeat himself; at the very least he would rearrange his manner of life, he would make sure of rooms like these, with flowers and light . . . I have a wife and two daughters. My wife's health is delicate and so on and so forth, and if I had to begin life all over again I would not marry. . . . No, no!

[*Enter Kuligin in a regulation tunic*]

KULIGIN [*going up to Irina*] Dear sister, allow me to congratulate you on your birthday and to wish you, sincerely and from the bottom of my heart, good health and everything else in the world. And then let me offer you this book as a present. [*Gives it to her*] It is the history of our High School during the last fifty years, written by myself. The book is worthless, and written because I had nothing else to do, but read it all the same. How are you, gentlemen? [*To Vershinin*] My name is Kuligin, I am a teacher of the local High School, with the rank of Assistant Councilor of Pedagogics. [*To Irina*] You will in this book find a list of all our High School graduates of the last fifty years. *Feci quod potui, faciant meliora potentes.* [*Kisses Masha*]

IRINA. But you gave me one of these at Easter.

KULIGIN [*laughs*] Impossible! You'd better give it back to me in that case, or else give it to the Colonel. Take it, Colonel. You may read it some day when you're bored.

VERSHININ. Thank you. [*Prepares to go*] I am so glad that I have made the acquaintance of . . .

OLGA. Must you go? No, not yet?

IRINA. You'll stay and have lunch with us. Please do.

OLGA. Yes, please!

VERSHININ [*bows*] I seem to have dropped in on your birthday. Forgive me, I didn't know, and I didn't offer you my congratulations. . . .

[*Goes with Olga into the living-room*]

KULIGIN. To-day is Sunday, the day of rest, so let us rest and rejoice, each in a manner compatible with his age and disposition. The carpets will have to be taken up for the summer and put away till winter. . . . Persian powder or naphthaline. . . . The Romans were healthy because they knew both how to work and how to rest, they had *mens sana in corpore sano*. Their lives ran along certain well-defined grooves. Our director says: "The chief thing about each life is its routine. Whoever loses his routine loses himself" — and it's just the same with our daily actions. [*Takes Masha by the waist, laughing*] Masha loves me. My wife loves me. And you ought to put the window curtains away with the carpets. . . . I'm awfully pleased with life to-day. Masha, we have to be at the director's at four. They're getting up an excursion for the pedagogues and their families.

MASHA. I shan't go.

KULIGIN [*hurt*] My dear Masha, why not?

MASHA. I'll tell you later . . . [*angrily*] All right, I'll go, only please don't bother me. . . . [*Steps to one side*]

KULIGIN. And then we're to spend the evening at

the director's. In spite of his ill-health that man tries, above everything else, to be sociable. A splendid, illuminating personality. A wonderful man. After yesterday's committee meeting, he said to me: "I'm tired, Fyodor Ilyitch, I'm tired!" [*Looks at the clock, then at his watch*] Your clock is seven minutes fast. "Yes," he said, "I'm tired."

[*Violin played off stage*]

OLGA. Let's sit down to lunch, people! There's to be a masterpiece of a pie!

KULIGIN. Oh my dear, dear Olga. Yesterday I worked from early morning till eleven at night, and got awfully tired. To-day I'm quite happy. [*Goes into living-room*] My dear . . .

TCHEBUTIKIN [*puts his paper into his pocket, and combs his beard*] A pie? Splendid!

MASHA [*severely to Tchebutikin*] Only mind; you're not to drink anything to-day. Do you hear? It's bad for you.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Oh, that's all right. I haven't been drunk for two years. [*Impatiently*] Motherkin, what difference does it make anyway?

MASHA. All the same, don't you dare drink! Don't you dare! [*Angrily, but so that her husband should not hear*] Another dull evening at the Director's, confound it!

TUZENBACH. I shouldn't go if I were you. . . . It's quite simple.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Don't go, dear heart!

MASHA. Yes, "don't go. . . ." It's a damned unbearable life . . . [*Goes into living-room*]

TCHEBUTIKIN [*follows her*] It's not so bad.

SOLYONY [*going into the living-room*] There, there, there. . . .

TUZENBACH. Vassily Vassilievitch, that's enough! That will do!

SOLYONY. There, there, there. . . .

KULIGIN [*gayly*] Your health, Colonel! I'm a pedagogue and quite at home here. I'm Masha's husband. . . . She's a good soul, a very good soul.

VERSHININ. I'll have some of this dark vodka . . . [*Drinks*] Your health! [*To Olga*] I'm very comfortable here!

[*Only Irina and Tuzenbach are now left in the sitting-room*]

IRINA. Masha's out of sorts to-day. She married when she was eighteen, when he seemed to her the wisest of men. And now it's different. He's the kindest man, but not the wisest.

OLGA [*impatiently*] Andrei, when are you coming?

ANDREI [*off*] One minute. [*Enters and goes to table*]

TUZENBACH. What are you thinking of?

IRINA. I don't like this Solyony of yours and I'm afraid of him. He says only foolish things.

TUZENBACH. He's a queer man. I'm sorry for him, though he vexes me. I think he's shy. When there are just the two of us he's quite all right and very good company; when other people are about he's rough and irritating. Don't go in, let them sit down without us in the meanwhile. Let me stay with you. What are you thinking of? [*Pause*] You're twenty. I'm not yet thirty. How many years are there left to us, with their

long monotony of days, filled with my love for you. . . .

IRINA. Nikolai Lvovitch, don't speak to me of love.

TUZENBACH [*does not hear*] I've a great thirst for life, struggle, and work, and this thirst has mated with my love for you, Irina, and you're so beautiful, and life seems so beautiful to me! What are you thinking of?

IRINA. You say that life is beautiful! Yes, if we only believe it to be so! So far the life of us three has not been beautiful; it has been stifling us . . . like a wet blanket . . . I'm crying. I oughtn't. . . . [*Dries her tears, smiles*] We must work, work. That is why we are unhappy and look at life so sadly; we don't know what work is. Our parents looked on work with contempt.

[*Enter Natalia Ivanovna; she wears a pink dress and a green sash*]

NATASHA. They're already at lunch. . . . I'm late. . . . [*Rapidly examines herself in a mirror, and straightens her clothes*] I think my hair's done all right. . . . [*Sees Irina*] Dear Irina Sergeievna, I congratulate you! [*Kisses her tenderly and at length*] You've so many visitors, I'm really ashamed. . . . How do you do, Baron!

OLGA [*enters from living-room*] Here's Natalia Ivanovna. How are you, dear! [*They kiss*]

NATASHA. Happy returns. I'm awfully embarrassed, you've so many people here.

OLGA. Oh come! They are all friends. [*Frightened, in an undertone*] You're wearing a green sash! My dear, you shouldn't!

NATASHA. Is it a sign of anything?

OLGA. No, it simply doesn't go well . . . and it looks so queer.

NATASHA [*in a tearful voice*] Yes? But it isn't really green, it's too dull for that. [*Goes into living-room with Olga. They have all sat down to lunch in the living-room, the sitting-room is empty*]

KULIGIN. I wish you a nice fiancé, Irina. It's high time you married.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Natalia Ivanovna, I wish you the same.

KULIGIN. Natalia Ivanovna has a fiancé already.

MASHA [*raps with her fork on a plate*] I'll have a glass of wine. Life is all right if you don't waste it!

KULIGIN. You've lost three good conduct marks.

VERSHININ. This is a good cordial. What's it made of?

SOLYONY. Cockroaches!

IRINA [*offended*] Phoo! How disgusting!

OLGA. There is to be a roast turkey and a sweet apple pie for dinner. Thank goodness I can spend all day and evening at home. You'll come in the evening, ladies and gentlemen. . . .

VERSHININ. And please may I come in the evening?

IRINA. Please do.

NATASHA. They don't stand on ceremony here.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Nature created us only for love. [*Laughs*]

ANDREI [*angrily*] Please don't. Aren't you tired of it?

[*Enter Fedotik and Rode with a large basket of flowers*]

FEDOTIK. They're lunching already.

RODE [*loudly and thickly*] Lunching? Yes, so they are. . . .

FEDOTIK. Wait a minute! [*Takes a photograph*] That's one. No, just a moment. . . . [*Takes another*] That's two. Now we're ready!

[*They take the basket and go into living-room, where they are the center of a noisy reception*]

RODE [*loudly*] Congratulations and best wishes! Lovely weather to-day, simply perfect. I was out walking with the High School students all the morning. I supervise their drills.

FEDOTIK. You may move, Irina Sergeievna! [*Takes a photograph*] You look well to-day. [*Takes a humming-top out of his pocket*] Here's a humming-top, by the way. It's got a lovely note!

IRINA. How very nice!

MASHA. "A green oak stands by the sea,
A chain of gold around it . . .
A chain of gold around it. . . ."

[*Tearfully*] What am I saying that for? Those words have been running in my head all day. . . .

KULIGIN. There are thirteen at table!

RODE [*aloud*] Surely you don't believe in that superstition? [*Laughter*]

KULIGIN. If there are thirteen at table then it means there are lovers present. It isn't you, Ivan Romanovitch, confound it! . . . [*Laughter*]

TCHEBUTIKIN. I'm a hardened sinner, but I really don't see why Natalia Ivanovna should blush. . . .

[*Loud laughter; Natasha runs out in the living-room; followed by Andrei*]

ANDREI. Don't pay any attention to them! Wait . . . stop, please. . . .

NATASHA. I'm embarrassed . . . I don't know what's the matter with me and they're all laughing at me. It wasn't nice of me to leave the table like that, but I can't help myself . . . I can't. [*Covers her face with her hands*]

ANDREI. My dear, I beg you. I implore you not to excite yourself. I assure you they're only joking, they're kind people. My dear, dear child, they're all kind and sincere people, and they like both you and me. Come here to the window, they can't see us here. . . . [*Looks around*]

NATASHA. I'm so unaccustomed to meeting people!

ANDREI. Oh, your youth, your splendid, beautiful youth! Darling, don't be so excited! Trust me, please trust me. . . . I'm so happy, my soul is full of love, of ecstasy. They can't see us! They can't! Why did I fall in love with you — when I did? — Oh, I can't understand! My dear! little sweetheart, be my wife! I love you, love you . . . [*They kiss*] as I never loved any one. . . .

[*Two officers come in and, seeing the lovers kiss, stop in astonishment*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

As before. It is 8 p.m. Somebody is heard playing a concertina outside in the street. There is no fire. Natalia Ivanovna enters dressed in a wrapper, carrying a candle; she stops by the door which leads into Andrei's room.

NATASHA. What are you doing, Andrei? Are you reading? It's nothing, only I. . . . [*She opens another door, and looks in, then closes it*] Isn't there any fire. . . .

ANDREI [*enters with book in hand*] What are you doing, Natasha?

NATASHA. I was looking to see if there wasn't a fire. It's Shrovetide, and the servants are simply beside themselves; I must take care that something doesn't happen. When I came through the living-room yesterday at midnight, there was a candle burning. I couldn't find out who had lighted it. [*Puts down her candle*] What's the time?

ANDREI [*looks at his watch*] A quarter past eight.

NATASHA. And Olga and Irina aren't in yet. The poor things are still at work. Olga at the teacher's council, Irina at the telegraph office . . . [*Sighs*] I said to your sister this morning, "Irina, darling, you must take care of yourself." But she pays no attention. Did you say it was a quarter past eight? I am afraid little

Bobby is quite ill. Why is he so cold? He was feverish yesterday, but to-day he is quite cold . . . I am so frightened!

ANDREI. It's all right, Natasha. The boy is well.

NATASHA. Still, I think we should put him on a diet. I am so afraid. And the performers were to be here after nine; they had better not come, Andrei.

ANDREI. I don't know. After all, they were asked.

NATASHA. This morning, when the little boy woke up and saw me he suddenly smiled; that means he knew me. "Good morning, Bobby!" I said, "good morning, darling." And he laughed. Children understand, they understand very well. So I'll tell them, Andrei dear, not to receive the performers.

ANDREI [*hesitatingly*] But what about my sisters? This is their flat.

NATASHA. They'll do as I wish. They are so kind. . . . [*Going*] I ordered sour milk for supper. The doctor says you must eat sour milk and nothing else, or you won't get thin. [*Stops*] Bobby is so cold. I'm afraid his room is too cold for him. It would be nice to put him into another room till the warm weather comes. Irina's room, for instance, is just right for the child: it's dry and has the sun all day. I must tell her, she can share Olga's room. . . . It isn't as if she was at home in the daytime, she only sleeps here. . . . [*A pause*] Andrei, darling, why are you so silent?

ANDREI. I was just thinking. . . . There is really nothing to say. . . .

NATASHA. Yes . . . there was something I wanted

to tell you . . . Oh, yes. Ferapont has come from the Council offices, he wants to see you.

ANDREI [*yawns*] Call him in!

[*Natasha goes out; Andrei reads his book, stooping over the candle which she has left behind. Ferapont enters; he wears a tattered old coat with the collar turned up. His ears are muffled*]

ANDREI. Good morning, grandfather. What have you to say?

FERAPONT. The Chairman sends a book and some documents or other. Here . . . [*Hands him a book and a packet*]

ANDREI. Thank you. It's all right. Why couldn't you come earlier? It's past eight now.

FERAPONT. What?

ANDREI [*louder*] I say you've come late, it's past eight.

FERAPONT. Yes, yes. I came when it was still light, but they wouldn't let me in. They said you were busy. Well, what was I to do? If you're busy, you're busy, and I'm in no hurry. [*He thinks that Andrei is asking him something*] What?

ANDREI. Nothing. [*Looks through the book*] To-morrow is Friday. I'm not supposed to go to work, but I'll come — all the same . . . and do some work. It's dull at home. [*Pause*] Oh, my dear old man, how strangely life changes, and how it deceives one! To-day, out of sheer boredom, I took up this book — old university lectures, and I couldn't help laughing. My God, I'm secretary of the local district council, the council which has Protopopoff for its chairman, yes, I'm the

secretary, and the summit of my ambition is — to become a member of the council! I to be a member of the local district council, I, who dream every night that I'm a professor of Moscow University, a famous scholar of whom all Russia is proud!

FERAPONT. I can't tell . . . I'm hard of hearing. . . .

ANDREI. If you weren't, I don't suppose I should talk to you. I've got to talk to somebody, and my wife doesn't understand me, and I'm a bit afraid of my sisters — I don't know why unless it is that they might make fun of me and make me feel ashamed . . . I don't drink, I don't like public houses, but old fellow, how I should like to be sitting just now in Tyestoff's place in Moscow, or at the Great Moscow!

FERAPONT. Moscow? That's where a contractor told me once that some merchants or other ate pancakes; one ate forty and he died, he was saying. Either forty or fifty, I forget which.

ANDREI. In Moscow you can sit in an enormous restaurant where you don't know anybody and where nobody knows you, and you don't feel that you're a stranger for all that. And here you know everybody and everybody knows you, and you're a stranger . . . and a lonely stranger.

FERAPONT. What? And the same contractor said — perhaps he was lying — that there was a cable stretching right across Moscow.

ANDREI. What for?

FERAPONT. I can't tell. The contractor said so.

ANDREI. Rubbish. [*He reads*] Were you ever in Moscow?

FERAPONT [*after a pause*] No. God did not lead me there. [*Pause*] Shall I leave?

ANDREI. You may. Good-by. [*Ferapont goes*] Good-by. [*Reads*] You can come to-morrow and fetch these documents . . . Run along . . . [*Pause*] He's gone. [*A ring*] Yes, yes . . .

[*Stretches himself and slowly goes into his own room. Behind the scene the nurse is singing a lullaby to the child. Masha and Vershinin come in. While they talk, a maid lights candles and a lamp*]

MASHA. I don't know. [*Pause*] I don't know. Of course, habit counts for a great deal. After father's death, for instance, it took us a long time to get used to the absence of orderlies. But, apart from habit, it seems to me in all fairness that, however it may be in other towns, the best and most thoroughly educated people are army men.

VERSHININ. I'm thirsty. I should like some tea.

MASHA [*glancing at her watch*] They'll bring it soon. I was married when I was eighteen, and I was afraid of my husband because he was a teacher and I'd only just left school. Then he seemed to me frightfully wise and learned and important. And now, unfortunately, that has changed.

VERSHININ. Yes . . . yes.

MASHA. I don't speak of my husband, I've grown used to him, but civilians in general are so often coarse, impolite, uneducated. Their rudeness offends me, it angers

me. I suffer when I see that a man isn't quite sufficiently refined, or delicate, or polite. I simply suffer agonies when I happen to be among schoolmasters, my husband's colleagues.

VERSHININ. Yes . . . But it seems to me that civilians and army men are equally interesting, in this town, at any rate. It's all the same! If you listen to a member of the local intelligentsia, whether civilian or military, he will tell you that he's sick of his wife, sick of his house, sick of his estate, sick of his horses. . . . We Russians are extremely gifted in the direction of thinking on an exalted plane, but, tell me, why do we aim so low in real life? Why?

MASHA. Why?

VERSHININ. Why is a Russian sick of his children, sick of his wife? And why are his wife and children sick of him?

MASHA. You're a little downhearted to-day.

VERSHININ. Perhaps I am. I haven't had any dinner, I've had nothing to eat since morning. My daughter is a little under the weather and when my girls are ill, I get very anxious and my conscience tortures me because they have such a mother. Oh, if you had seen her to-day! What an insignificant creature! We began quarreling at seven in the morning and at nine I slammed the door and went out. [*Pause*] I never speak of it, it's strange that I should complain to you alone. [*Kisses her hand*] Don't be angry with me. I haven't anybody but you, nobody at all. . . . [*Pause*]

MASHA. What a noise in the oven. Just before

father's death there was a noise in the pipe, just like that.

VERSHININ. Are you superstitious?

MASHA. Yes.

VERSHININ. That's strange. [*Kisses her hand*] You are a splendid, wonderful woman. Splendid, wonderful! It is dark here, but I can see the sparkle in your eyes!

MASHA [*sits on another chair*] There is better light here.

VERSHININ. I love you, love you, love you. . . . I love your eyes, your gestures, I dream of them. . . . Splendid, wonderful woman!

MASHA [*laughing gently*] When you talk to me like that, I laugh; I don't know why, for I'm afraid. Don't repeat it, please. . . . [*In an undertone*] No, go on, it's all the same to me. . . . [*Covers her face with her hands*] Somebody's coming, let's talk about something else. . . .

[*Irina and Tuzenbach come in through the living-room*]

TUZENBACH. My surname is really triple. I am called Baron Tuzenbach-Krone-Altschauer, but I am Russian and Orthodox, just as you are. There is very little German left in me, unless perhaps it is the patience and the obstinacy with which I bore you. I see you home every night.

IRINA. I am so tired!

TUZENBACH. And I'll come to the telegraph office to see you home every day for ten or twenty years, until

you drive me away. [*He sees Masha and Vershinin; joyfully*] Is that you? How do you do?

IRINA. Well, I am home at last. [*To Masha*] A lady came to telegraph to her brother in Saratoff that her son died to-day, and she couldn't remember the address. So she sent the telegram without an address, just to Saratoff. She was crying. And for some reason or other I was rude to her. "I've no time," I said. It was so stupid. Are the performers coming to-night?

MASHA. Yes.

IRINA [*sitting down in an armchair*] I need a rest. I am tired.

TUZENBACH [*smiling*] When you come home from your work you seem so young, and so pitiful. . . . [*Pause*]

IRINA. I am tired. No, I don't like the telegraph office, I don't like it.

MASHA. You've grown thinner. . . . [*Whistles a little*] And you look younger, and your face has become like a boy's.

TUZENBACH. That's the way she does her hair.

IRINA. I must find another position, this one is not to my liking. The very thing I wanted and hoped to get, is lacking. Labor without poetry, without ideas . . . [*A knock on the floor*] The doctor is knocking. [*To Tuzenbach*] Will you knock, dear? I can't . . . I'm tired. . . . [*Tuzenbach knocks*] He'll come in a minute. Something ought to be done. Yesterday the doctor and Andrei played cards at the club and lost money. Andrei seems to have lost 200 rubles.

MASHA [*with indifference*] What can we do now?

IRINA. He lost money a fortnight ago, he lost money in December. Perhaps if he lost everything we should go away from this town. Oh, my God, I dream of Moscow every night. I'm just like a lunatic. [*Laughs*] We go there in June, and before June there's still . . . February, March, April, May . . . nearly half a year!

MASHA. Only Natasha mustn't learn of these losses.

IRINA. I suppose it would be all the same to her.

[*Tchebutikin, who has only just got out of bed — he was resting after dinner — comes into the living-room and combs his beard. He then sits at the table and takes a newspaper from his pocket*]

MASHA. Here he is. . . . Has he paid his rent?

IRINA [*laughs*] No. He's been here eight months and hasn't paid a kopeck. Seems to have forgotten.

MASHA [*laughs*] What dignity in his pose! [*They all laugh*]

IRINA. Why are you so silent, Alexander Ignateievitch?

VERSHININ. I don't know. I must have some tea. Half my life for a glass of tea: I haven't had anything since morning.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Irina Sergeievna!

IRINA. What is it?

TCHEBUTIKIN. Please come here, *Venez ici.* [*Irina goes and sits at the table*] I can't do without you. [*Irina begins to play solitaire*]

VERSHININ. Well, if we can't have tea, let's philosophize, at any rate.

TUZENBACH. Yes, let's. About what?

VERSHININ. About what? Let us meditate . . . about life as it will be after our time; for example, in two or three hundred years.

TUZENBACH. Well? After our time people will fly about in balloons, the cut of one's coat will change, perhaps they'll discover a sixth sense and develop it, but life will remain the same, laborious, mysterious, and happy. And in a thousand years' time, people will still be sighing: "Life is hard!" — and at the same time they'll be just as afraid of death, and unwilling to meet it, as we are.

VERSHININ [*thoughtfully*] How can I put it? It seems to me that everything on earth must change, little by little, and is already changing under our very eyes. After two or three hundred years, after a thousand — the actual time doesn't matter — a new and happy age will begin. We, of course, shall not take part in it, but we live and work and even suffer to-day that it should come. We create it — and in that one object is our destiny, and, if you like, our happiness.

[*Masha laughs softly.*]

TUZENBACH. What is it?

MASHA. I don't know. I've been laughing all day, ever since morning.

VERSHININ. I finished my education at the same point as you; I have had no university training; I read a lot, but I cannot choose my books and perhaps what I read is not at all what I should, but the longer I live, the more I want to know. My hair is turning white, I

am nearly an old man now, but I know so little, oh, so little! But I think I know the things that matter most, and that are most real. I know them well. And I wish I could make you understand that there is no happiness for us, that there should not and cannot be. . . . We must only work and work, and happiness is only for our distant posterity. [*Pause*] If not for me, then for the descendants of my descendants.

[*Fedotik and Rode come into the living-room; they sit and sing softly, strumming on guitars*]

TUZENBACH. According to you, one should not even think about happiness! But suppose I am happy?

VERSHININ. No.

TUZENBACH [*moves his hands and laughs*] We do not seem to understand each other. How can I convince you? [*Masha laughs quietly, Tuzenbach continues, pointing at her*] Yes, laugh! [*To Vershinin*] Not only after two or three centuries, but in a million years, life will still be as it was; life does not change, it remains forever, following its own laws which do not concern us, or which, at any rate, you will never be able to fathom. Migrant birds, cranes for example, fly and fly, and whatever thoughts, high or low, enter their heads, they will still fly and not know why or where. They fly and will continue to fly, whatever philosophers should be born among them; they may philosophize as much as they like, only they will fly. . . .

MASHA. Still is there a meaning?

TUZENBACH. A meaning. . . . Imagine that snow is falling! Any special meaning in that? [*Pause*]

MASHA. It seems to me that a man must have faith, or must search for a faith, or his life will be empty, empty . . . To live and not to know why the cranes fly, why babies are born, why there are stars in the sky . . . Either you must know why you live, or everything is trivial, not worth a straw. [*A pause*]

VERSHININ. Still, I am sorry that my youth has gone.

MASHA. Gogol says: life in this world is a dull matter, gentlemen!

TUZENBACH. And I say it's difficult to argue with you, gentlemen! Confound it all!

TCHEBUTIKIN [*reading*] Balzac was married at Berditcheff. [*Irina is singing softly*] That's worth making a note of. [*He makes a note*] Balzac was married at Berditcheff. [*Goes on reading*]

IRINA [*laying out cards, thoughtfully*] Balzac was married at Berditcheff.

TUZENBACH. The die is cast. I've handed in my resignation, Maria Sergeievna.

MASHA. So I heard. I don't see what good that does; I don't like civilians.

TUZENBACH. Never mind . . . [*Gets up*] I'm not handsome; what use am I as a soldier? Well, it makes no difference . . . I shall work. If only just once in my life I could work so that I could come home in the evening, fall exhausted on my bed, and go to sleep at once. [*Going into the living-room*] Workmen, I suppose, do sleep soundly!

FEDOTIK [*to Irina*] I bought some colored pencils for

you at Pizhikoff's in the Moscow Road, just now. And here is a little knife.

IRINA. You have got into the habit of behaving to me as if I am a little girl, but I am grown up. [*Takes the pencils and the knife, then, with joy*] How lovely!

FEDOTIK. And I bought myself a knife . . . look at it . . . one blade, another, a third, an ear-scoop, scissors, nail-cleaners. . . .

RODE [*loudly*] Doctor, how old are you?

TCHEBUTIKIN. I? Thirty-two. [*Laughter*]

FEDOTIK. I'll show you another kind of solitaire. [*Lays out cards*]

[*A samovar is brought in; Anfisa attends to it; a little later Natasha enters and helps by the table; Solyony arrives and, after greetings, sits at the table*]

VERSHININ. What a wind!

MASHA. Yes. I'm tired of winter. I've already forgotten what summer's like.

IRINA. The solitaire is coming out, I see. We shall go to Moscow.

FEDOTIK. No, it won't come out. Look, the eight was on the two of spades. [*Laughs*] That means you won't go to Moscow.

TCHEBUTIKIN [*reading paper*] Tsitsikar. Smallpox is raging here.

ANFISA [*coming up to Masha*] Masha, have some tea, little mother. [*To Vershinin*] Please have some, sir . . . excuse me, but I've forgotten your name. . . .

MASHA. Bring some here, nurse. I shan't go over there.

IRINA. Nurse!

ANFISA. Coming, coming!

NATASHA [*to Solyony*] Children at the breast understand perfectly. I said, "Good morning, Bobby; good morning, dear!" and he looked at me in quite an unusual way. You think it's only the mother in me that is speaking; I assure you that isn't so! He's a wonderful child.

SOLYONY. If he was my child I'd roast him on a frying-pan and eat him. [*Takes his glass into the drawing-room and sits in a corner*]

NATASHA [*covers her face in her hands*] Vulgar, ill-bred man!

MASHA. Lucky the one who doesn't notice whether it's winter now, or summer. I think that if I were in Moscow, I shouldn't mind the weather.

VERSHININ. A few days ago I was reading the prison diary of a French minister. He had been sentenced on account of the Panama scandal. With what joy, what delight, he speaks of the birds which he saw through the prison windows, which he had never noticed while he was a minister. Now, of course, that he is at liberty, he notices birds no more than he did before. When you live in Moscow, you'll not notice it, in just the same way. There can be no happiness for us, it exists only in our anticipations.

TUZENBACH [*takes cardboard box from the table*] Where is the candy?

IRINA. Solyony has eaten it.

TUZENBACH. All of it?

ANFISA [*serving tea*] There's a letter for you.

VERSHININ. For me? [*Takes the letter*] From my daughter. [*Reads*] Yes, of course . . . I will go quietly. Excuse me, Maria Sergeievna. I shan't have any tea. [*Stands up, excited*] That eternal story. . . .

MASHA. What is it? Is it a secret?

VERSHININ [*quietly*] My wife has poisoned herself again. I must go. I'll leave quietly. It's all awfully unpleasant. [*Kisses Masha's hand*] My dear, splendid, good woman . . . I'll go this way, quietly. [*Exit*]

ANFISA. Where has he gone? And I'd served tea . . . What a man!

MASHA [*angrily*] Be quiet! You never give one a moment's peace . . . [*Goes to the table with her cap*] I'm tired of you, old woman!

ANFISA. My dear! Why are you cross?

ANDREI'S VOICE. Anfisa!

ANFISA [*mocking*] Anfisa! He sits there and . . . [*Exit*]

MASHA [*in the living-room, by the table angrily*] Let me sit down! [*Disturbs the cards on the table*] Here you are, spreading your cards out. Have some tea!

IRINA. You are cross, Masha.

MASHA. If I am cross, then don't talk to me. Don't touch me!

TCHEBUTIKIN. Don't touch her, don't touch her . . .

MASHA. You're sixty, but you're like a boy, always up to some beastly nonsense.

NATASHA [*sighs*] Dear Masha, why use such language? With your beautiful face and body, you would be simply fascinating in good society, I tell you so

frankly, if it wasn't for your language. *Je vous prie, pardonnez-moi, Marie, mais vous avez des manières un peu grossières.*

TUZENBACH [*restraining his laughter*] Let me have . . . Let me have . . . there's some brandy, I think.

NATASHA. *Il parfait, que mon Bobick déjà ne dort pas,* he has awakened. He isn't well to-day. I'll go to him, excuse me. . . . [*Exit*]

IRINA. Where has Alexander Ignateievitch gone?

MASHA. Home. Something extraordinary happened to his wife again.

TUZENBACH [*goes to Solyony with a brandy-flask in his hands*] You go on sitting by yourself, thinking of something — goodness knows what. Come and let's make peace. Let's have some brandy. [*They drink*] I expect I'll have to play the piano all night, some rubbish most likely . . . well, so be it!

SOLYONY. Why make peace? I haven't quarreled with you.

TUZENBACH. You always make me feel as if something had taken place between us. You've a strange character, you must admit.

SOLYONY [*declaims*] "I am strange, but who is not? Don't be angry, Aleko!"

TUZENBACH. And what has Aleko to do with it? [*Pause*]

SOLYONY. When I'm with one other man I behave just like everybody else, but in company I'm dull and shy and . . . talk all manner of rubbish. But I'm more

honest and more honorable than very, very many people. And I can prove it.

TUZENBACH. I am often angry with you, you always fasten on to me in company, but I like you all the same. I'm going to drink my fill to-night, whatever happens. Drink now!

SOLYONY. Let's drink. [*They drink*] I never had anything against you, Baron. But my character is like Lermontoff's. [*In a low voice*] I even rather resemble Lermontoff, they say. . . .

[*Takes a scent-bottle from his pocket, and scents his hands*]

TUZENBACH. I've sent in my resignation. Enough said! I've been thinking about it for five years, and at last I made up my mind. I shall work.

SOLYONY [*declaims*] "Do not be angry, Aleko . . . forget, forget, thy dreams of yore . . ."

[*While he is speaking Andrei enters quietly with a book and sits near the candle*]

TUZENBACH. I shall work.

TCHEBUTIKIN [*going with Irina into the living-room*] And then the food was also real Caucasian onion soup, and for a roast, some chehartma.

SOLYONY. Cheremsha isn't meat at all, but a plant something like an onion.

TCHEBUTIKIN. No, my angel. Chehartma isn't onion, but roast mutton.

SOLYONY. And I tell you, cheremsha — is a sort of onion.

TCHEBUTIKIN. And I tell you chehartma — is mutton.

SOLYONY. And I tell you cheremsha — is a sort of onion.

TCHEBUTIKIN. What's the use of arguing! You've never been in the Caucasus, and never ate any chehartma.

SOLYONY. I never ate it, because I hate it. It smells like garlic.

ANDREI [*imploring*] Please, please! I beg you!

TUZENBACH. When are the performers coming?

IRINA. They promised to be here around nine; that is, quite soon.

TUZENBACH [*embraces Andrei*] "Oh my house, my house, my new built-house."

ANDREI [*dances and sings*] "Newly-built of maple-wood."

TCHEBUTIKIN [*dances*] "Its walls are like a sieve!" [*Laughter*]

TUZENBACH [*kisses Andrei*] Hang it all, let's drink. Andrei, old boy, let's drink with you. And I'll go with you, Andrei, to the University of Moscow.

SOLYONY. Which one? There are two universities in Moscow.

ANDREI. There's only one university in Moscow.

SOLYONY. Two, I tell you.

ANDREI. I don't care if there are three. So much the better.

SOLYONY. There are two universities in Moscow! [*There are murmurs and "hushes"*] There are two universities in Moscow, the old one and the new one. And if you don't like to listen, if my words annoy you, then I

need not speak. I can even go into another room . . . [*Exit.*]

TUZENBACH. Bravo, bravo! [*Laughs*] Come on, now, I'm going to play. Funny man, Solyony . . . [*Goes to the piano and plays a waltz.*]

MASHA [*dancing solo*] The Baron's drunk, the Baron's drunk, the Baron's drunk!

[*Natasha comes in*]

NATASHA [*to Tchebutikin*] Ivan Romanovitch! [*Says something in a whisper to Tchebutikin, then goes out quietly: Tchebutikin touches Tuzenbach on the shoulder and whispers something to him*]

IRINA. What is it?

TCHEBUTIKIN. Time for us to go. Good-bye.

TUZENBACH. Good-night. It's time we went.

IRINA. But, really, the performers!

ANDREI [*in confusion*] There won't be any performers. You see, dear, Natasha says that Bobby isn't quite well, and so . . . In a word, I don't care, and it's absolutely all the same to me.

IRINA [*shrugging her shoulders*] Bobby ill!

MASHA. What is she thinking of! Well, if they are sent home, I suppose they must go. [*To Irina*] Bobby's all right, it's she herself . . . Here! [*Taps her forehead*] Little bourgeoise!

[*Andrei goes to his room through the right-hand door, Tchebutikin follows him. In the dining-room they are saying good-bye*]

FEDOTIK. What a shame! I was expecting to spend

the evening here, but of course, if the little baby is ill . . . I'll bring him some toys to-morrow.

RODE [*loudly*] I slept late after dinner to-day because I thought I was going to dance all night. It's only nine o'clock now!

MASHA. Let's go into the street, we can talk there. Then we can settle things.

[*Good-bye and good nights are heard. Tuzenbach's merry laughter is heard. All go out. Anfisa and the maid clear the table, and put out the lights. The nurse sings. Andrei, wearing an overcoat and a hat, and Tchebutikin enter silently*]

TCHEBUTIKIN. I never managed to get married because my life passed me by like a sheet of lightning, and because I was madly in love with your mother, who was married.

ANDREI. One shouldn't marry. One shouldn't, because it's a bore.

TCHEBUTIKIN. So there I am, in my loneliness. Say what you will, loneliness is a terrible thing, old fellow . . . Though really . . . of course, it doesn't matter in the least!

ANDREI. Let's be quicker.

TCHEBUTIKIN. What are you in such a hurry for? We shall be in time.

ANDREI. I'm afraid my wife may stop me.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Ah!

ANDREI. I shan't play to-night, I shall only sit and look on. I don't feel very well . . . What am I to do for my asthma, Ivan Romanovitch?

TCHEBUTIKIN. Don't ask me! I don't remember, old fellow, I don't know.

ANDREI. Let's go through the kitchen. [*They go out. A bell rings twice; voices and laughter are heard*]

IRINA [*enters*] What's that?

ANFISA [*whispers*] The musicians! [*Bell*]

IRINA. Tell them there's nobody at home, nurse. They must excuse us.

[*Anfisa goes out. Irina walks about the room deep in thought; she is excited. Solyony enters*]

SOLYONY [*in surprise*] There's nobody here . . . Where are they all?

IRINA. They've gone home.

SOLYONY. How strange. Are you alone here?

IRINA. Yes, alone. [*A pause*] Good-bye.

SOLYONY. Just now I behaved tactlessly, thoughtlessly. But you are not like all the others, you are noble and pure, you see the truth . . . You alone can understand me. I love you, deeply, beyond measure, I love you.

IRINA. Good-bye! Go away.

SOLYONY. I cannot live without you. [*Follows her*] Oh, my happiness! [*Through his tears*] Oh, joy! Wonderful, marvelous, glorious eyes, such as I have never seen in any other woman . . .

IRINA [*coldly*] Stop it, Vassily Vassilievitch!

SOLYONY. This is the first time I spoke to you of love, and it is as if I am no longer on earth, but on another planet. [*Wipes his forehead*] Well, never mind. I can't make you love me by force, of course . . . but I don't intend to have any more-favored rivals . . . No . . . I

swear to you by all the saints, I shall kill my rival . . . Oh, beautiful one!

[*Natasha enters with a candle; she looks in through one door, then through another, and goes past the door leading to her husband's room*]

NATASHA. Here's Andrei. Let him go on reading. Excuse me, Vassily Vassilievitch, I did not know you were here; I am in negligée.

SOLYONY. It's all the same to me. Good-bye! [*Exit*]

NATASHA. You're so tired, my poor dear girl! [*Kisses Irina*] If only you went to bed earlier.

IRINA. Is Bobby asleep?

NATASHA. Yes, but restlessly. By the way, dear, I wanted to tell you, but either you weren't at home, or I was busy . . . I think Bobby's present nursery is cold and damp. And your room would be so nice for the child. My dear, darling girl, do share Olga's room for a while!

IRINA [*not understanding*] Whose?

[*The bells of a troika are heard as it drives up to the house*]

NATASHA. You and Olga can share a room, for the time being, and Bobby can have yours. He's such a darling; to-day I said to him, "Bobby, you're mine! Mine!" And he looked at me with his dear little eyes. [*A bell rings*] It must be Olga. How late she is! [*The maid enters and whispers to Natasha*] Protopopoff? What a queer man to do such a thing. Protopopoff's come and wants me to go for a drive with him in his troika. [*Laughs*] How funny these men are . . . [*A bell rings*]

Somebody has come. Suppose I go and have half an hour's drive . . . [*To the maid*] Say I shan't be long. [*Bell rings*] Somebody's ringing, it must be Olga.

[*Exit. The maid runs out; Irina sits deep in thought; Kuligin and Olga enter, followed by Vershinin*]

KULIGIN. Well, there you are. And you said there was going to be a party.

VERSHININ. It's queer; I went away not long ago, half an hour back, and the musicians were expected.

IRINA. They've all gone.

KULIGIN. Has Masha gone, too? Where has she gone? And what's Protopopoff waiting for downstairs in his troika? Whom is he waiting for?

IRINA. Don't ask questions . . . I'm tired.

KULIGIN. Oh, you're all so touchy!

OLGA. My committee meeting is only just over. I'm tired out. Our school principal is ill, so I had to take her place. My head, my head is aching . . . [*Sits*] Andrei lost 200 rubles at cards yesterday . . . the whole town is talking of it . . .

KULIGIN. Yes, my meeting tired me, too. [*Sits*]

VERSHININ. My wife took it into her head to frighten me just now by nearly poisoning herself. It's all right now, and I'm glad — I can rest now . . . But perhaps we should go away? Well, my best wishes, Fyodor Ilyitch, let's go somewhere together! I can't, I absolutely can't stay home . . . Come on!

KULIGIN. I'm tired. I won't go. [*Gets up*] I'm tired. Has my wife gone home?

IRINA. I suppose so.

KULIGIN [*kisses Irina's hand*] Good-bye, I'm going to rest all day to-morrow and the day after. Best wishes! [*Going*] I should like some tea. I was looking forward to spending the whole evening in pleasant company and — *o, fallacem hominum spem!* . . . Accusative case after an interjection . . .

VERSHININ. Then I'll go somewhere by myself.

[*Exit with Kuligin, whistling*]

OLGA. I've such a headache . . . Andrei has been losing money . . . The whole town is talking . . . I'll go and lie down. [*Going*] I'm free to-morrow . . . Oh, my God, what a relief! I'm free to-morrow, I'm free the day after . . . Oh my head, my head . . . [*Exit*]

IRINA [*alone*] They've all gone. Nobody's left.

[*A concertina is being played in the street. The nurse sings*]

NATASHA [*in fur coat, and cap, steps across the living-room, followed by the maid*] I'll be back in half an hour. I'm only going for a little drive. [*Exit*]

IRINA [*alone in her misery*] To Moscow! Moscow! Moscow!

CURTAIN.

ACT THREE.

The room shared by Olga and Irina. Beds, screened off, back, right and left. It is a little after two in the morning. Back stage a fire-alarm is ringing; it has been going for some time. Nobody in the house has gone to bed yet. Masha is lying on a sofa dressed, as usual, in black. Enter Olga and Anfisa.

ANFISA. They are now sitting underneath the stairs. I said to them, "Won't you come up," I said, "you can't go on like this," and they simply cried, "We don't know where father is." They said, "He may be burnt up by now." What an idea! And in the yard there are some people . . . also undressed.

OLGA [*takes a dress out of the closet*] Take this gray dress . . . and this . . . and the blouse as well . . . Take the skirt, too, nurse . . . My God! How awful it is! The whole of the Kirsanovsky district seems to have burned down. Take this . . . and this . . . [*Throws clothes into her hands*] The poor Vershinins are so frightened. . . Their house was nearly burnt. They ought to come here for the night . . . They shouldn't be allowed to go home . . . Poor Fedotik has lost everything, there's nothing left . . .

ANFISA. Couldn't you call Ferapont, Olga dear? I can hardly manage . . .

OLGA [*rings*] They'll never answer . . . [*At the door*]

Come here, whoever it is! [*Through the open door is seen a window, red with flame; a fire-engine is heard passing the house*] How awful this is. And how sick I am of it! [*Ferapont enters*] Take these things down . . . The Kolotilin girls are below . . . and let them have them. This, too . . .

FERAPONT. Yes'm. In the year twelve Moscow, too, was in flames. God! The Frenchmen were surprised.

OLGA. Go on, go on . . .

FERAPONT. Yes'm. [*Exit*]

OLGA. Nurse, dear, give them all we have. We don't need anything. Give it all to them, nurse . . . I'm tired, I can hardly stand on my legs . . . The Vershinins mustn't be allowed to go home . . . The girls can sleep in the drawing-room, and Alexander Ignateievitch can go downstairs to the Baron's flat . . . Fedotik can go there, too, or else into our living-room . . . The doctor is drunk, beastly drunk, as if on purpose, so nobody can go to him. Vershinin's wife, too, may go into the drawing-room.

ANFISA [*tired*] Olga, dear girl, don't dismiss me! Don't dismiss me!

OLGA. You're talking nonsense, nurse. Nobody is dismissing you.

ANFISA [*puts Olga's head against her breast*] My dear, precious girl, I'm working, I'm toiling away . . . I'm growing weak, and they'll all say go away! And where shall I go? Where? I'm eighty. Eighty-one years old . . .

OLGA. You sit down, nurse dear . . . You're tired,

poor darling . . . [*Makes her sit down*] Rest, dear. You're so pale!

[*Natasha comes in*]

NATASHA. They say that a committee to assist the sufferers from the fire must be formed at once. What do you think of that? It's a splendid idea. Of course, the poor ought to be helped; it's the duty of the rich. Bobby and little Sophie are sleeping, sleeping as if nothing had happened. There's such a lot of people here, the place is full of them, wherever you go. There's influenza in the town now. I'm afraid the children will catch it.

OLGA [*not listening to her*] From this room we can't see the fire, it's peaceful here . . .

NATASHA. Yes . . . I suppose I'm all untidy. [*Before the looking-glass*] They say I'm growing stout . . . It isn't true! Certainly it isn't! Masha's asleep; the poor thing is tired out . . . [*Coldly, to Anfisa*] Don't dare sit down in my presence! Get up! Out of this! [*Exit Anfisa; a pause*] I don't understand what makes you keep that old woman!

OLGA [*confusedly*] Excuse me, I don't understand, either . . .

NATASHA. She's no good here. She comes from the country, she ought to live there . . . Spoiling her, I call it! I like order in the house! We don't want any unnecessary people here. [*Caresses her cheek*] You're tired, poor thing! Our head mistress is tired! And when my little Sophie grows up and goes to school I shall be so afraid of you.

OLGA. I shan't be head mistress.

NATASHA. They'll appoint you, Olga. It's settled.

OLGA. I'll refuse the post. I can't . . . I'm not strong enough . . . [*Drinks a glass of water*] You were so rude to nurse just now . . . I'm sorry. I can't stand it . . . everything seems dark before my eyes . . .

NATASHA [*excited*] Forgive me, Olga, forgive me . . . I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

[*Masha gets up, takes a pillow and goes out angrily*]

OLGA. Try to understand, my dear . . . we have been brought up in an unusual way, perhaps, but I really can't stand it. Such behavior has a terrible effect on me, I get ill . . . It makes me so despondent!

NATASHA. Forgive me, forgive me . . . [*Kisses her*]

OLGA. The least bit of rudeness, the slightest discourtesy, upsets me.

NATASHA. I often say too much, it's true, but you must agree, dear, that she might just as well live in the country.

OLGA. She has been with us for thirty years.

NATASHA. But she can't do any work now. Either I don't understand you, or you don't want to understand me. She's not able to work, she only sleeps or sits around.

OLGA. Very well! Let her sit around!

NATASHA [*surprised*] What do you mean? She's only a servant. [*Crying*] I don't understand you, Olga. I've got a nurse, a wet-nurse, we've a cook, a housemaid . . . what do we want that old woman for as well? What good is she? [*Fire-alarm back stage*]

OLGA. I've grown ten years older to-night.

NATASHA. We must come to an agreement, Olga.

Your place is the school, mine — the home. You devote yourself to teaching, I, to the household. And if I talk about servants, then I know what I am talking about; I know what I am talking about . . . And to-morrow there's to be no more of that old thief, that old hag . . . [*Stamping her foot*] That witch! And don't you dare annoy me! Don't you dare! [*Stopping short*] Really, if you don't move downstairs, we shall always be quarreling. This is awful.

[*Enter Kuligin*]

KULIGIN. Where's Masha? It's time we went home. The fire seems to be burning out. [*Stretches himself*] Only one block has burnt down, but there was such a wind that it seemed at first the whole town was going up in flames. [*Sits*] I'm tired. My dear Olga . . . I often think that if it hadn't been for Masha, I should have married you. You are such a kindly girl . . . I am absolutely tired out. [*Listens*]

OLGA. What is it?

KULIGIN. The doctor, of course, has been drinking hard; he's terribly drunk. He might have done it on purpose! [*Gets up*] He seems to be coming here . . . Do you hear him? Yes, here . . . [*Laughs*] What a man . . . really . . . I'll hide. [*Goes to the closet, and hides in the corner*] What a scoundrel!

OLGA. He hasn't touched a drop for two years, and now he suddenly goes and gets drunk . . .

[*Retires with Natasha to the back of the room. Tchebutikin enters; apparently sober, he stops, looks round, then goes to the wash-stand and begins to wash his hands*]

TCHEBUTIKIN [*morosely*] Devil take them all . . . take them all . . . They think I'm a doctor and can cure everything, and I know absolutely nothing, I've forgotten all I ever knew, I remember nothing, absolutely nothing. [*Olga and Natasha leave, unnoticed by him*] Devil take it. Last Wednesday I attended a woman in Zosip — and she died, and it's my fault that she died. Yes . . . I used to know a certain amount five-and-twenty years ago, but I don't remember anything now. Nothing. Perhaps I'm not really a man, and am only pretending that I have arms and legs and a head; perhaps I don't exist at all, and only imagine that I walk, and eat, and sleep. [*Cries*] Oh, if only I didn't exist! [*Stops crying; morosely*] The devil only knows . . . Day before yesterday they were talking at the club; they mentioned Shakespeare, Voltaire . . . I've never read, never read at all, and I made believe as if I had. So did the others. Oh, how beastly! How petty! And then I remembered the woman whom I attended and who died on Wednesday . . . and I couldn't get her out of my thoughts, and everything in my soul turned crooked, nasty, wretched . . . So I drank to forget . . .

[*Irina, Vershinin and Tuzenbach enter; Tuzenbach is wearing new and fashionable civilian clothes*]

IRINA. Let's sit down. Nobody will come in here.

VERSHININ. The whole town would have been destroyed if it hadn't been for the soldiers. Good men! [*Rubs his hands appreciatively*] Splendid people! Oh, what a fine lot!

KULIGIN [*coming up to him*] What's the time?

TUZENBACH. It's after three now. Dawn is here.

IRINA. They are all sitting in the living-room, nobody thinks of leaving. And that Solyony of yours is sitting there . . . [*To Tchebutikin*] Hadn't you better go to sleep, doctor?

TCHEBUTIKIN. It's all right . . . thank you . . . [*Combs his beard*]

KULIGIN [*laughs*] Your tongue is a bit thick, eh, Ivan Romanovitch! [*Pats him on the shoulder*] Good man! *In vino veritas,* the ancients used to say.

TUZENBACH. They keep on asking me to arrange a concert in aid of the sufferers.

IRINA. As if one could do anything . . .

TUZENBACH. It might be arranged, if necessary. In my opinion, Maria Sergeievna is an excellent pianist.

KULIGIN. Yes, excellent!

IRINA. She's forgotten everything. She hasn't played for three years . . . or four.

TUZENBACH. In this town absolutely nobody understands music, not a soul, except myself, and I assure you on my word of honor that Maria Sergeievna plays beautifully, almost with genius.

KULIGIN. You are right, Baron. I'm awfully fond of Masha. She's very fine.

TUZENBACH. To be able to play so beautifully and to realize at the same time that nobody, nobody can understand you!

KULIGIN [*sighs*] Yes . . . But is it proper for her to appear in a concert? [*Pause*] You see, I don't know anything! Perhaps it will be all right. I admit that

our director is a kindly fellow, very kindly indeed, very brainy. But his views are rather conventional . . . Of course it is none of his business but still, if you wish, perhaps I'd better talk to him.

[*Tchebutikin takes a porcelain clock into his hands and examines it*]

VERSHININ. I got so dirty during the fire, I don't look like anybody on earth. [*Pause*] Yesterday, I happened to overhear casually that they desire to transfer our brigade to some distant place. Some said to Poland, others, to Chita.

TUZENBACH. I heard so, too. Well, if it is so, the town will be quite empty.

IRINA. And we'll go away, too!

TCHEBUTIKIN [*drops the clock which breaks to pieces*] To pieces!

[*A pause; everybody is pained and confused*]

KULIGIN [*gathering up the pieces*] To smash such an expensive thing! — Oh, Ivan Romanovitch, Ivan Romanovitch! You'll get a zero mark in behavior!

IRINA. That clock used to belong to our late mother.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Perhaps . . . To your mother, your mother. Perhaps I didn't break it; it only looks as if I broke it. Perhaps we only think that we exist, when really we don't. I don't know anything, nobody knows anything. [*At the door*] What are you looking at? Natasha has a little romance with Protopopoff, and you don't see it . . . There you sit and see nothing, and Natasha has a little romance with Protopopoff . . . [*Sings*] Won't you please accept this date . . . [*Exit*]

VERSHININ. Yes. [*Laughs*] How strange everything really is! [*Pause*] When the fire broke out, I hurried off home; when I get there I see the house is whole, uninjured, and in no danger, but my two girls are standing by the door in just their underclothes, their mother isn't there, the crowd is excited, horses and dogs are running about, and the girl's faces are so agitated, terrified, beseeching, and I don't know what else. My heart hurt me, when I saw those faces. My God, I thought, what these girls will have to put up with if they live long! I caught them up and ran, and still kept on thinking the one thing: what they will have to live through in this world! [*Fire-alarm; a pause*] I come here and find their mother shouting and angry. [*Masha enters with a pillow and sits on the sofa*] And when my girls were standing by the door in just their underclothes, and the street was red from the fire, there was a dreadful noise, and I thought that something of the sort used to happen many years ago when an enemy made a sudden attack, and looted, and burned . . . And at the same time what a difference there really is between the present and the past! And when a little more time has gone by, in two or three hundred years perhaps, people will look at our present life with just the same fear, and the same contempt, and the whole past will seem clumsy and dull, and very uncomfortable, and strange. Oh, indeed, what a life there will be, what a life! [*Laughs*] Forgive me, I've dropped into philosophy again. Please let me continue. I do long to philosophize, I'm in just that sort of mood. [*Pause*] As if they are all asleep. As I was saying: what a life

there will be! Only just imagine . . . There are only three persons like yourselves in the town just now, but in future generations there will be more and more, and still more, and the time will come when everything will change and become as you would have it, people will live as you do, and then you, too, will go out of date; people will be born who are better than you . . . [*Laughs*] Yes, to-day, I am in a most peculiar mood. I am devilishly keen on living . . . [*Sings*] "The power of love is known to all the world, Great good grows out of it —" [*Laughs*]

MASHA. Tra-ta-ta? . . .

VERSHININ. Tra-ta-ta . . .

MASHA. Tra-ra-ram-tam-tam?

VERSHININ. Tra-ra-ram-tam-tam. [*Laughs*]

[*Enter Fedotik*]

FEDOTIK [*dancing*] I'm burnt out, I'm burnt out! Down to the ground! [*Laughter*]

IRINA. I don't see anything funny about it. Is everything burnt?

FEDOTIK [*laughs*] Absolutely. Nothing left at all. The guitar's burnt, and the photographs are burnt, and all my correspondence . . . And I was going to make you a present of a note-book, and that's burnt, too.

[*Solyony comes in*]

IRINA. No, you can't come here, Vassily Vassilievitch. Please go away.

SOLYONY. Why can the Baron come here and not I?

VERSHININ. We really must go. How's the fire?

SOLYONY. They say it's dying down. No, I absolutely

don't see why the Baron can, and not I! [*Scents his hands*]

VERSHININ. Tra-ra-ram-tam-tam?

MASHA. Tra-ra-ram-tam-tam.

VERSHININ [*laughs to Solyony*] Let's go into the living-room.

SOLYONY. Very well, we'll make a note of it. "If I should try to make this clear, the geese would be annoyed, I fear." [*Looks at Tuzenbach*] There, there, there . . .

[*Goes out with Vershinin and Fedotik*]

IRINA. How Solyony smoked! . . . [*In surprise*] The Baron's asleep! Baron! Baron!

TUZENBACH [*waking*] I am tired, I must say . . . The brickworks . . . No, I'm not raving, I mean it; I'm going to start work soon at the brickworks . . . I've already talked it over. [*Tenderly, to Irina*] You're so pale, and beautiful, and charming . . . Your paleness pierces the dark air like light . . . You are sad, displeased with life . . . Oh, come with me, let's go and work together!

MASHA. Nikolai Lvovitch, go away from here.

TUZENBACH [*laughs*] Are you here? I didn't see you. [*Kisses Irina's hand*] Good-bye, I'm going . . . I look at you now and I remember, as if it was long ago, your birthday when you, cheerfully and merrily, were talking about the joys of labor! . . . And how happy life seemed to me, then! What has happened to it now? [*Kisses her hand*] There are tears in your eyes. Go to bed now; it is already daybreak . . . morning is here . . . If only I was allowed to give my life for you!

MASHA. Nikolai Lvovitch, go away! Really —

TUZENBACH. I'm off. [*Exit*]

MASHA [*lies down*] Are you asleep, Fyodor?

KULIGIN. Eh?

MASHA. Shouldn't you go home?

KULIGIN. My dear Masha, my darling Masha . . .

IRINA. She's tired. You might let her rest, Fedia.

KULIGIN. I'll go at once. My wife is good, fine . . . I love you, my only one . . .

MASHA [*angrily*] *Amo, amas, amat, amamus, amatis, amant.*

KULIGIN [*laughs*] No, she is really wonderful. I've been your husband seven years, and it seems as if I married only yesterday. On my word. No, you really are a wonderful woman. I'm pleased, I'm pleased, I'm pleased!

MASHA. I'm bored, I'm bored, I'm bored . . . [*Sits up*] But I can't get it out of my head . . . It's simply disgraceful. It has been gnawing away at me . . . I can't keep silent. I mean about Andrei . . . He has mortgaged this house at the bank . . . and his wife has all the money; but the house doesn't belong to him alone, but to the four of us! He ought to know that, if he's an honorable man.

KULIGIN. What's the use, Masha? Andrei is in debt all round; well, let him do as he pleases.

MASHA. It's disgraceful, anyway. [*Lies down*]

KULIGIN. You and I are not poor. I work, teach my classes, give private lessons . . . I am a plain, honest man . . . *Omnia mea mecum porto,* as they say.

MASHA. I don't want anything, but the unfairness of it disgusts me. [*Pause*] You go, Fyodor.

KULIGIN [*kisses her*] You are tired, just rest for half an hour, and I'll sit and wait for you. Sleep . . . [*Going*] I'm pleased, I'm pleased, I'm pleased . . . [*Exit*]

IRINA. Yes, really, our Andrei has lost weight; how mediocre and old and trite he has become through that woman's influence! Really — formerly he wished to be a professor, and yesterday he was boasting that at last he had been made a member of the district council. He is a member, and Protopopoff is chairman . . . The whole town talks and laughs about it, and he alone knows and sees nothing . . . And now everybody's gone to watch the fire, but he sits alone in his room and pays no attention, only just plays on his violin. [*Nervously*] Oh, it's awful, awful, awful. [*Weeps*] I can't, I can't bear it any longer! . . . I can't, I can't! . . .

[*Olga comes in and puts in order her little table. Irina is sobbing loudly*] Throw me out, throw me out, I can't bear any more!

OLGA [*alarmed*] What is it, what is it? Dear!

IRINA [*sobbing*] Where? Where has everything gone? Where is it all? Oh, my God, my God! I've forgotten everything, everything . . . I don't remember what is the Italian for window, or, well, for ceiling . . . I forget everything, every day I forget it, and life passes and will never return, and we'll never go to Moscow . . . I see that we'll never go . . .

OLGA. Dear, dear . . .

IRINA [*controlling herself*] Oh, I am unhappy . . . I can't work, I shan't work. Enough, enough! I used to be a telegraph operator, now I work at the town council offices, and I have nothing but hate and contempt for all they give me to do . . . I am already twenty-three, I have already been at work for a long while, and my brain has dried up, and I've grown thin, plain, old, and there is no relief of any sort, and time goes and it seems all the while as if I were going away from the real, the beautiful life, farther and farther away, down some precipice. I'm in despair and I can't understand how it is that I am still alive, that I haven't killed myself.

OLGA. Don't cry, dear girl, don't cry . . . I suffer, too.

IRINA. I'm not crying, not crying . . . Enough . . . Look, I'm not crying any more. Enough . . . enough!

OLGA. Dear, I tell you as a sister and a friend, if you care for my advice, marry the Baron. [*Irina cries softly*] You respect him, you think highly of him . . . It is true that he is not handsome, but he is so honorable and clean . . . people don't marry for love, but for the sake of duty. I think so, at any rate, and I'd marry without being in love. Whoever he is, I should marry him, as long as he is a decent man. Even if he is old . . .

IRINA. I was always waiting until we should be settled in Moscow; there I would have met my true love; I used to dream of him, and love him . . . But it's all turned out to be nonsense, all nonsense . . .

OLGA [*embraces her sister*] My dear, beautiful sister, I understand everything; when Baron Nikolai Lvovitch

left the army and came to us in correct dress, he seemed so bad-looking to me that I even started crying . . . He asked, "What are you crying for?" How could I tell him! But if God meant him to marry you, I would be happy. That would be different, quite different.

[*Natasha with a candle walks across the stage from right to left without speaking*]

MASHA [*sitting up*] She walks as if she had set something on fire.

OLGA. Masha, you're silly, you're the silliest of the family. Please forgive me for saying so. [*Pause*]

MASHA. I must make a confession, dear sisters. My soul is in pain. I will confess to you, and never again to anybody . . . I'll tell you this minute. [*Softly*] It's my secret but you must know everything . . . I can't be silent . . . [*Pause*] I love, I love . . . I love that man . . . You saw him only just now . . . Why don't I say it . . . in one word. I love Vershinin.

OLGA [*goes behind her screen*] Stop that, I won't even listen to you!

MASHA. What am I to do? [*Takes her head in her hands*] First he seemed queer to me, then I was sorry for him . . . then I fell in love with him . . . fell in love with his voice, his words, his misfortune, his two daughters.

OLGA [*behind the screen*] I'm not listening. You may talk any nonsense you like, it will be all the same, I shan't hear.

MASHA. Oh, Olga, you are foolish. I am in love—that means that is to be my fate. It means that is to be my lot . . . And he loves me . . . It is all awful. Yes;

it isn't good, is it? [*Takes Irina's hand and draws her to her*] Oh, my dear . . . How are we to go through with our lives, what is to become of us? . . . When you read a novel it all seems so easy and plain, but when you fall in love yourself, then you learn that nobody knows anything, and each must decide for himself . . . My dear ones, my sisters . . . I've confessed, now I shall keep silence . . . Like the lunatics in Gogol's story, I'm going to be silent . . . silent . . .

[*Andrei enters, followed by Ferapont*]

ANDREI [*angrily*] What do you want? I don't understand.

FERAPONT [*at the door, impatiently*] I've already told you ten times, Andrei Sergeievitch.

ANDREI. In the first place I'm not Andrei Sergeievitch, but your honor.

FERAPONT. The firemen, sir, ask if they can cut across your garden to the river. Else they have to go all the way round, all the way round; it's a nuisance.

ANDREI. All right. Tell them it's all right. [*Exit Ferapont*] I'm tired of them. Where is Olga? [*Olga comes out from behind the screen*] I came to you for the key of the closet. I lost my own. You have a little key. [*Olga gives him the key; Irina goes behind her screen; pause*] What a huge fire! It's going down now. Hang it all, that Ferapont made me so angry that I talked nonsense to him . . . Your honor, indeed . . . [*A pause*] Why are you so silent, Olga? [*Pause*] It's time you stopped all that nonsense and behaved as if you were properly alive . . . You are here, Masha. Irina is here. Well, since we're all here, let's come to a complete under-

standing, once and for all. What have you against me? What is it?

OLGA. Please don't, Andrei dear. We'll talk to-morrow. [*Excited*] What an awful night!

ANDREI [*much confused*] Don't excite yourself. I ask you in perfect calmness; what have you against me? Tell me straight.

VERSHININ'S VOICE. Tra-ra-ram-tam-tam!

MASHA [*stands; loudly*] Tra-ta-ta! [*To Olga*] Good-bye, Olga, God bless you. [*Goes behind screen and kisses Irina*] Sleep well . . . Good-bye, Andrei. Go away now, they're tired . . . you can explain to-morrow . . . [*Exit*]

OLGA. Let's postpone this until to-morrow, Andrei! [*Goes behind the screen*] It's time to go to bed.

ANDREI. I'll only say this and go. At once . . . In the first place, you have something against Natasha, my wife; I've noticed it since the very day of my marriage. Natasha is a beautiful and honest creature, straight and honorable — that's my opinion. I love and respect my wife; understand it, I respect her, and I insist that others respect her, too. I repeat, she's an honest and honorable person, and all your disapproval is simply silly . . . [*Pause*] In the second place, you seem to be annoyed because I am not a professor, and am not engaged in study. But I work for the zemstvo, I am a member of the district council, and I consider my service as worthy and as high as the service of science. I am a member of the district council, and I am proud of it, if you want to know . . . [*Pause*] In the third place, I have still this to say . . . that I have mortgaged the house without ob-

taining your permission . . . For that I am to blame, and ask to be forgiven. My debts led me into doing it . . . thirty-five thousand . . . I do not play at cards any more, I stopped long ago, but the chief thing I have to say in my defense is that you girls receive a pension, and I don't . . . my wages, so to speak . . . [*Pause*]

KULIGIN [*at the door*] Is Masha there? [*Excitedly*] Where is she? It's queer . . . [*Exit*]

ANDREI. They don't hear. Natasha is a splendid, honest person. [*Walks about in silence, then stops*] When I married I thought we should be happy . . . all of us . . . But, my God . . . [*Weeps*] My dear, dear sisters, don't believe me, don't believe me . . . [*Exit*]

[*Fire-alarm. The stage is empty*]

IRINA [*behind her screen*] Olga, who's knocking on the floor?

OLGA. It's Doctor Ivan Romanovitch. He's drunk.

IRINA. What a restless night! [*Pause*] Olga! [*Looks out*] Did you hear? They are taking the brigade away from us; it's going to be transferred to some place far away.

OLGA. It's only a rumor.

IRINA. Then we shall be left alone . . . Olga!

OLGA. Well?

IRINA. My dear, darling sister, I esteem, I highly value the Baron, he's a splendid man; I'll marry him, I'll consent, only let's go to Moscow! I implore you, let's go! There's nothing better than Moscow on earth! Let's go, Olga, let's go!

CURTAIN.

ACT FOUR.

The old garden at the house of the Prozoroffs. There is a long avenue of firs, at the end of which the river can be seen. There is a forest on the far side of the river. On the right is the terrace of the house: bottles and tumblers are on a table here; it is evident that champagne has just been drunk. It is midday. Every now and again passers-by walk across the garden, from the road to the river; five soldiers go past rapidly. Tchebutikin, in a comfortable frame of mind which does not desert him throughout the act, sits in an armchair in the garden, waiting to be called. He wears a peaked cap and has a stick. Irina, Kuligin with a cross hanging from his neck and without his mustaches, and Tuzenbach are standing on the terrace seeing off Fedotik and Rode, who are coming down into the garden; both officers are in service uniform.

TUZENBACH [*exchanges kisses with Fedotik*] You're a good sort, we got on so well together. [*Exchanges kisses with Rode*] Once again . . . Good-bye, old man!

IRINA. Au revoir!

FEDOTIK. It isn't au revoir, it's good-bye; we'll never meet again!

KULIGIN. Who knows! [*Wipes his eyes; smiles*] Here I've started crying!

IRINA. We'll meet again sometime.

FEDOTIK. After ten years — or fifteen? We'll hardly

know one another then; we'll say, "How do you do?" coldly . . . [*Takes a snapshot*] Keep still . . . Once more, for the last time.

RODE [*embracing Tuzenbach*] We shan't meet again . . . [*Kisses Irina's hand*] Thank you for everything, for everything!

FEDOTIK [*grieved*] Don't be in such a hurry!

TUZENBACH. We shall meet again, if God wills it. Write to us. Be sure to write.

RODE [*looking round the garden*] Good-bye, trees! [*Shouts*] Yo-ho! [*Pause*] Good-bye, echo!

KULIGIN. Best wishes. Go and get yourselves wives there in Poland . . . Your Polish wife will embrace you and call you "kochanku!" [*Laughs*]

FEDOTIK [*looking at the time*] There's less than an hour left. Solyony is the only one of our battery who is going on the barge; the rest of us are going with the main body. Three batteries are leaving to-day, another three to-morrow and then the town will be quiet and peaceful.

TUZENBACH. And terribly dull.

RODE. And where is Maria Sergeievna?

KULIGIN. Masha is in the garden.

FEDOTIK. We'd like to say good-bye to her.

RODE. Good-bye, I must go, or else I'll commence weeping . . . [*Quickly embraces Kuligin and Tuzenbach, and kisses Irina's hand*] We've been so happy here . . .

FEDOTIK [*to Kuligin*] Here's a keepsake for you . . . a note-book with a pencil . . . We'll go to the river from here . . . [*They go aside and both look round*]

RODE [*shouts*] Yo-ho!

KULIGIN [*shouts*] Good-bye.

[*In the background Fedotik and Rode meet Masha; they say good-bye and go out with her*]

IRINA. They've gone . . . [*Sits on the bottom step of the terrace*]

TCHEBUTIKIN. And they forgot to say good-bye to me.

IRINA. Why so?

TCHEBUTIKIN. I just forgot, somehow. Though I shall see them again soon. I'm going to-morrow. Yes . . . just one day left. I shall be retired in a year, then I'll come here again and finish my life near you. I've only one year before I receive my pension . . . [*Puts one newspaper into his pocket and takes out another*] I'll come here to you and change my life radically . . . I'll be so quiet . . . so agree . . . agreeable, respectable . . .

IRINA. Yes, you ought to change your life, dear man, somehow or other.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Yes, I feel it. [*Sings softly*] "Tarara-boom-deay . . ."

KULIGIN. We won't reform Ivan Romanovitch! We won't reform him!

TCHEBUTIKIN. If only you would teach me how! Then I would reform!

IRINA. Fyodor has shaved his mustache! I can't bear to look at him.

KULIGIN. Well, what about it?

TCHEBUTIKIN. I could tell you what your face looks like now, but it wouldn't be polite.

KULIGIN. Well! It's the custom, it's the *modus vivendi.* Our Director is clean-shaven, and so I, too, when I received my inspectorship, had my mustaches removed. Nobody likes it, but it's all the same to me. I'm satisfied. Whether I have mustaches or not, I'm satisfied . . . [*Sits*]

[*In the background Andrei is wheeling a perambulator with a sleeping child*]

IRINA. Ivan Romanovitch, be a darling. I'm awfully worried. You were out on the boulevard last night; tell me, what happened?

TCHEBUTIKIN. What happened? Nothing. Quite a trifling matter. [*Reads paper*] Of no importance!

KULIGIN. They say that Solyony and the Baron met yesterday on the boulevard near the theatre . . .

TUZENBACH. Stop! Really — [*Waves his hand and goes into the house*]

KULIGIN. Near the theatre . . . Solyony behaved offensively to the Baron, who lost his temper and said something nasty . . .

TCHEBUTIKIN. I don't know. It's all nonsense.

KULIGIN. At some seminary or other a master wrote "nonsense" on an essay, and the student couldn't make the letters out — thought it was some sort of a Latin word. [*Laughs*] Awfully funny, that. They say that Solyony is in love with Irina and hates the Baron . . . That's quite natural. Irina is a very nice girl. She's like Masha. She's so pensive . . . Only, Irina, your character is more gentle. Though Masha's character, too, is very good. I'm very fond of Masha.

[*Shouts of "Yo-ho!" are heard behind the stage*]

IRINA [*shudders*] Everything seems to frighten me to-day. [*Pause*] I have everything ready, and I send my things off after dinner. The Baron and I will be married to-morrow, and to-morrow we go away to the brick-works, and the next day I go to the school, and the new life begins. God will help me! When I took my examination for the teacher's post, I actually wept for joy and gratitude . . . [*Pause*] The cart will be here in a minute for my things . . .

KULIGIN. Somehow or other, all this doesn't seem at all real. As if it were all ideas, and nothing really actual. Still, with all my soul I wish you happiness.

TCHEBUTIKIN [*with deep feeling*] My splendid . . . my dear, precious girl . . . You've made some progress, I won't catch up with you. I'm left behind like a migrant bird grown old, and unable to fly. Fly, my dear, fly, and God be with you! [*Pause*] It's a pity you shaved your mustaches, Fyodor Ilyitch.

KULIGIN. Oh, forget it! [*Sighs*] To-day the soldiers will be gone, and everything will continue as in the old days. Say what you will, Masha is a good, honest woman. I love her very much, and am grateful for my fate. People have such different fates. There's a Kosireff who works in the excise department here. He was at school with me; he was expelled from the fifth class of the High School for being entirely unable to understand *ut consecutivum*. He's awfully hard up now and in very poor health, and when I meet him I say to him, "How do you do, *ut consecutivum*." "Yes," he

says, "precisely *consecutivum* . . ." and coughs. But I've been successful all my life, I'm happy, and I even have a Stanislaus Cross, of the second class, and now I myself teach others that *ut consecutivum*. Of course, I'm a clever man, much cleverer than many, but happiness doesn't lie only in that. . . .

[*"The Maiden's Prayer" is being played on the piano in the house*]

IRINA. To-morrow night I shan't hear that "Maiden's Prayer" any more, and I shan't be meeting Protopopoff. [*Pause*] Protopopoff is sitting there in the drawing room; and he came to-day . . .

KULIGIN. Hasn't the head-mistress come yet?

IRINA. No. She has been sent for. If you only knew how difficult it is for me to live alone, without Olga . . . She lives at the High School; she, a head-mistress, busy all day with her affairs and I'm alone, bored, with nothing to do, and hate the room I live in . . . I've made up my mind: if I can't live in Moscow, then it must come to this. It's fate. It can't be helped. It's all the will of God, that's the truth. Nikolai Lvovitch proposed to me. Well? I thought it over and accepted. He's a good man . . . it's quite remarkable how good he is . . . And suddenly my soul took wings, I became happy, and light-hearted, and once again the desire for work, work, came over me . . . Only something happened yesterday, some secret dread has been hanging over me . . .

TCHEBUTIKIN. Rubbish. Nonsense.

NATASHA [*at the window*] The head-mistress.

KULIGIN. The head-mistress is here. Let's go. [*Exit with Irina into the house*]

TCHEBUTIKIN [*reads his paper and hums softly*] . . . "Tara-ra . . . boom-deay."

[*Masha approaches, Andrei is wheeling a perambulator in the background*]

MASHA. Here you sit, doing nothing.

TCHEBUTIKIN. What then?

MASHA [*sits*] Nothing . . . [*Pause*] Did you love my mother?

TCHEBUTIKIN. Very much.

MASHA. And did she love you?

TCHEBUTIKIN [*after a pause*] I don't remember that.

MASHA. Is my man here? When our cook Martha used to ask about her policeman, she called him "my man." Is he here?

TCHEBUTIKIN. Not yet.

MASHA. When you take your happiness in little bits, in snatches, and then lose it, as I have done, you gradually grow coarser, more bitter. [*Points to her breast*] I'm boiling in here . . . [*Looks at Andrei with the perambulator*] There's our brother Andrei . . . All our hopes in him have gone. There was once a great bell, a thousand persons were hoisting it, much money and labor had been spent on it, when it suddenly fell and was broken. Suddenly, for no particular reason . . . Andrei is like that . . .

ANDREI. When are they going to stop making such a noise in the house? It's awful.

TCHEBUTIKIN. They won't be much longer. [*Looks*

at his watch] My watch is very old-fashioned, it strikes the hours . . . [*Winds the watch and makes it strike*] The first, second, and fifth batteries are to leave at one o'clock precisely. [*Pause*] And I go to-morrow.

ANDREI. Forever?

TCHEBUTIKIN. I don't know. Perhaps I'll return in a year. The devil only knows . . . it's all one . . .

[*Somewhere a harp and violin are being played*]

ANDREI. The town will grow empty. It will be as if they put a cover over it. [*Pause*] Something happened yesterday near the theatre. The whole town knows of it, but I don't.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Nothing. A silly little affair. Solyony annoyed the Baron, who lost his temper and insulted him, and so at last Solyony had to challenge him. [*Looks at his watch*] It's about time, I think . . . At half-past twelve, in the public wood, the one you can see from here across the river . . . Piff-paff. [*Laughs*] Solyony thinks he's Lermontoff, and even writes verses. That's all very well, but this is his third duel.

MASHA. Whose?

TCHEBUTIKIN. Solyony's.

MASHA. And the Baron?

TCHEBUTIKIN. What about the Baron? [*Pause*]

MASHA. Everything's all muddled up in my head . . . But I say it should not be allowed. He might wound the Baron or even kill him.

TCHEBUTIKIN. The Baron is a good man, but one Baron more or less — what difference does it make? It's

all the same! [*Beyond the garden somebody shouts "Co-ee! Hallo!"*] You wait. That's Skvortsoff shouting; one of the seconds. He's in a boat. [*Pause*]

ANDREI. In my opinion it's simply immoral to fight a duel, or to witness one, even in the quality of a doctor.

TCHEBUTIKIN. It only seems so . . . We don't exist, there's nothing on earth, we don't really live, it only seems that we live. Does it matter, anyway!

MASHA. You talk and talk the whole day long . . . [*Going*] You live in a climate like this, where it might snow any moment, and there you talk . . . [*Stops*] I won't go into the house, I can't . . . [*Goes along the avenue*] The migrant birds are already on the wing . . . [*Looks up*] Swans or geese. My dear, happy things . . . [*Exit*]

ANDREI. Our house will be empty. The officers will go away, you are going, my sister is getting married, and I alone will remain in the house.

TCHEBUTIKIN. What about your wife?

[*Ferapont enters with some documents*]

ANDREI. A wife's a wife. She's honest, well-bred, yes, and kind, but with all that there is still something about her that degenerates her into a petty, blind, even in some respects misshapen animal. In any case, she isn't a human being. I tell you as a friend, as the only man to whom I can lay bare my soul. I love Natasha, it's true, but sometimes she seems extraordinarily vulgar, and then I lose myself and can't understand why I love her so much, or, at any rate, used to love her . . .

TCHEBTIKIN [*rises*] I'm going away to-morrow, old

chap, and perhaps we'll never meet again, so here's my advice. Put on your cap, take a stick in your hand, go . . . go on and on, without looking round. And the farther you go, the better.

[*Solyony goes across the back of the stage with two officers; he catches sight of Tchebutikin, and turns to him, the officers go on*]

SOLYONY. Doctor, it's time. It's half-past twelve already. [*Shakes hands with Andrei*]

TCHEBUTIKIN. Half a minute. I'm tired of the lot of you. [*To Andrei*] If anybody asks for me, say I'll be back soon . . . [*Sighs*] Oh, oh, oh!

SOLYONY. "He didn't have the time to sigh. The bear sat on him heavily." [*Goes up to him*] What are you groaning for, old man?

TCHEBUTIKIN. Stop it!

SOLYONY. How's your health?

TCHEBUTIKIN [*angry*] As smooth as oil!

SOLYONY. The old man is unnecessarily excited. I won't go far, I'll just bring him down like a snipe. [*Takes out his scent-bottle and scents his hands*] I've poured out a whole bottle of scent to-day and they still smell . . . of a dead body. [*Pause*] Yes . . . You remember the poem

"But he, the rebel seeks the storm,
As if the storm will bring him rest . . ."?

TCHEBUTIKIN. Yes.

"He didn't have the time to sigh,
The bear sat on him heavily."

[*Exit with Solyony. Shouts are heard. Andrei and Ferapont come in*]

FERAPONT. Documents to sign . . .

ANDREI [*irritated*] Go away! Leave me! Please! [*Goes away with the perambulator*]

FERAPONT. That's what documents are for, to be signed.

[*Retires to back of stage. Enter Irina, with Tuzenbach in a straw hat; Kuligin walks across the stage, shouting, "Co-ee, Masha, co-ee!"*]

TUZENBACH. He seems to be the only man in the town who is glad that the soldiers are going.

IRINA. One can understand that. [*Pause*] The town will be empty.

TUZENBACH. My dear, I shall return soon.

IRINA. Where are you going?

TUZENBACH. I must go into the town and then . . . see the others off.

IRINA. It's not true . . . Nikolai, why are you so absent-minded to-day? [*Pause*] What happened near the theatre yesterday?

TUZENBACH [*making an impatient gesture*] In an hour I shall return and be with you again. [*Kisses her hands*] My darling . . . [*Looking her closely in the face*] It's five years now since I fell in love with you, and still I can't get used to it, and you seem to me to grow more and more beautiful. What lovely, wonderful hair! What eyes! I'm going to take you away to-morrow. We shall work, we shall be rich, my dreams

will come true. You will be happy. There's only one thing, one thing only: you don't love me!

IRINA. It isn't in my power! I shall be your wife, I shall be true to you, and obedient, but I can't love you. What can I do! [*Cries*] I have never been in love in my life. Oh, I used to think so much of love. I have been thinking about it for so long, day and night, but my soul is like a costly piano which is locked and the key lost. [*Pause*] You seem so unhappy.

TUZENBACH. I didn't sleep all night. There is nothing in my life so awful as to frighten me, only that lost key torments my soul and won't let me sleep. Say something to me. [*Pause*] Say something to me. . . .

IRINA. What can I say, what?

TUZENBACH. Anything.

IRINA. Don't! Don't! [*Pause*]

TUZENBACH. It is curious how silly trivial little things, sometimes for no apparent reason, seem to matter suddenly. At first you laugh at them, you think they are of no importance, you go on and you feel that you have not the strength to control yourself. Oh don't let's talk about it! I am happy. It is as if for the first time in my life I see these firs, maples, beeches, and they all look at me inquisitively and wait. What beautiful trees and when you come to think of it, how beautiful life must be near them! [*A shout of "co-ee!" in the distance*] It's time I went . . . There's a tree which has dried up but it still sways in the breeze with the others. And so it seems to me that if I die, I shall still take part in life one way or another. Good-bye, dear

. . . [*Kisses her hands*] The papers which you gave me are on my table under the calendar.

IRINA. I am coming with you.

TUZENBACH [*nervously*] No, no! [*He goes quickly and stops in the avenue*] Irina!

IRINA. What is it?

TUZENBACH [*not knowing what to say*] I haven't had any coffee to-day. Tell them to make me some . . .

[*He goes out quickly. Irina stands deep in thought. Then she goes to the back of the stage and sits on a swing. Andrei comes in with the perambulator and Ferapont also appears*]

FERAPONT. Andrei Sergeievitch, it isn't as if the documents were mine, they are the government's. I didn't make them.

ANDREI. Oh, what has become of my past and where is it? I used to be young, happy, clever, I used to be able to think and frame clever ideas, the present and the future seemed to me full of hope. Why do we, almost before we have begun to live, become dull, gray, uninteresting, lazy, apathetic, useless, unhappy? . . . This town has already been in existence for two hundred years and it has a hundred thousand inhabitants, not one of whom is in any way different from the others. There has never been, now or at any other time, a single leader of men, a single scholar, an artist, a man of even the slightest eminence who might arouse envy or a passionate desire to be emulated. They only eat, drink, sleep, and then they die . . . more people are born and also eat, drink, sleep, and so as not to become half-witted

out of sheer boredom, they try to make life many-sided with their beastly back-biting, vodka, cards, and litigation. The wives deceive their husbands, and the husbands lie, and pretend they see nothing and hear nothing, and the evil influence irresistibly oppresses the children and the divine spark in them is extinguished, and they become just as pitiful corpses and just as much like one another as their fathers and mothers . . . [*Angrily to Ferapont*] What do you want?

FERAPONT. What? Documents want signing.

ANDREI. I'm tired of you.

FERAPONT [*handing him papers*] The hall-porter from the law courts said just now that in the winter there were two hundred degrees of frost in Petersburg.

ANDREI. The present is beastly, but when I think of the future, how good it is! I feel so light, so free; there is a light in the distance, I see freedom. I see myself and my children freeing ourselves from vanities, from kvass, from goose baked with cabbage, from after-dinner naps, from base idleness . . .

FERAPONT. He said that two thousand people were frozen to death. The people were frightened, he said. In Petersburg or Moscow, I don't remember where.

ANDREI [*overcome by a tender emotion*] My dear sisters, my beautiful sisters! [*Crying*] Masha, my sister. . . .

NATASHA [*at the window*] Who's talking so loudly out there? Is that you, Andrei? You'll wake little Sophie. *Il ne faut pas faire du bruit, Sophie dort déjà. Vous êtes un ours.* [*Angrily*] If you want to talk, then

give the perambulator and the baby to somebody else. Ferapont, take the perambulator!

FERAPONT. Yes'm. [*Takes the perambulator*]

ANDREI [*confused*] I'm speaking quietly.

NATASHA [*at the window, nursing her boy*] Bobby! Naughty Bobby! Bad little Bobby!

ANDREI [*looking through the papers*] All right, I'll look them over and sign if necessary, and you can take them back to the office. . . . [*Goes into house reading papers; Ferapont takes the perambulator to the back of the garden*]

NATASHA [*at the window*] Bobby, what's your mother's name? Dear, dear! And who's this? That's Aunt Olga. Say to your aunt, "How do you do, Olga!"

[*Two wandering musicians, a man and a girl, are playing on a violin and a harp. Vershinin, Olga, and Anfisa come out of the house and listen for a minute in silence; Irina walks up to them*]

OLGA. Our garden might be a public thoroughfare, from the way people walk and ride across it. Nurse, give something to those musicians!

ANFISA [*gives money to the musicians*] Go away with God's blessing! [*The musicians bow and go away*] A bitter sort of people. You don't play on a full stomach. [*To Irina*] How do you do, Irisha! [*Kisses her*] Well, little girl, here I am, still alive! Still alive! In the High School, together with little Olga, in her official apartments . . . so the Lord has appointed for my old age. Sinful woman that I am, I've never lived like that in my life before . . . A large flat, government prop-

erty, and I've a whole room and bed to myself. All government property. I wake up at night and, oh God, and Holy Mother, there isn't a happier person than I!

VERSHININ [*looks at his watch*] We are going soon, Olga Sergeievna. It's time for me to go. [*Pause*] I wish you all happiness — all happiness . . . Where's Maria Sergeievna?

IRINA. She's somewhere in the garden. I'll go and look for her.

VERSHININ. If you'll be so kind. I haven't time.

ANFISA. I'll go and look, too. [*Shouts*] Little Masha, co-ee! [*Goes out with Irina down into the garden*] Co-ee, co-ee!

VERSHININ. Everything comes to an end. And so we, too, must part. [*Looks at his watch*] The town gave us a sort of farewell breakfast, we had champagne to drink and the mayor made a speech, and I ate and listened, but my soul was here all the time . . . [*Looks round the garden*] I have grown so used to you now.

OLGA. Shall we ever meet again?

VERSHININ. Probably not. [*Pause*] My wife and both my daughters will stay here another two months. If anything happens, or if anything has to be done . . .

OLGA. Yes, yes, of course. You need not worry. [*Pause*] To-morrow there won't be a single soldier left in the town, it will all be a memory, and, of course, for us a new life will begin . . . [*Pause*] None of our plans are coming right. I didn't wish to be a headmistress, but they made me one, all the same. It means there's no chance to go to Moscow . . .

VERSHININ. Well . . . thank you for everything. Forgive me if I've . . . I've said such an awful lot — forgive me for that, too, don't think badly of me.

OLGA [*wipes her eyes*] Why isn't Masha coming? . . .

VERSHININ. What else can I say in parting? Can I philosophize about anything? [*Laughs*] Life is heavy. To many of us it seems dull and hopeless, but still, it must be acknowledged that it is getting lighter and clearer, and it seems that the time is not far off when it will be quite clear. [*Looks at his watch*] It's time I went! Mankind used to be absorbed in wars, and all its existence was filled with campaigns, attacks, defeats. Now we've outlived all that, leaving after us a great waste, which we cannot fill at present; but mankind is looking for something, and will certainly find it. Oh, if it only happened more quickly. [*Pause*] If only education could be added to industry, and industry to education. [*Looks at his watch*] It's time I went . . .

OLGA. Here she comes.

[*Enter Masha*]

VERSHININ. I came to say good-by. . . .

[*Olga steps aside a little, so as not to be in their way*]

MASHA [*looking him in the face*] Good-bye . . . [*She gives him a lingering kiss*]

OLGA. Enough! Enough! [*Masha breaks into tears*]

VERSHININ. Write to me . . . Don't forget! Let me go . . . it's time. Take her away, Olga Sergeievna . . . it's time . . . I'm late . . .

[*He kisses Olga's hand in evident emotion, then embraces Masha once more and goes out quickly*]

OLGA. Don't, Masha! Stop, dear . . . [*Kuligin enters*]

KULIGIN [*confused*] Never mind, let her cry, let her . . . My dear Masha, my good Masha . . . You're my wife, and I'm happy, whatever happens . . . I'm not complaining, I don't reproach you at all . . . Olga is a witness to it . . . Let's begin to live again as we used to, and not by a single word, or hint . . .

MASHA [*restraining her sobs*]

"A green oak stands by the sea,
A chain of gold around it . . .
A chain of gold around it . . .

I'm going out of my head . . . "a green oak stands . . . by the sea" . . .

OLGA. Be quiet, Masha, be quiet! . . . give her some water . . .

MASHA. I'm not crying any more.

KULIGIN. She's not crying any more . . . she's kindly . . .

[*A shot is heard from a far distance*]

MASHA. "A green oak stands by the sea,
A chain of gold around it . . .
A green cat — a green oak —

I'm mixing it up . . . [*Drinks some water*] Life is dull . . . There's nothing more now that I desire . . . I'll be all right in a moment . . . It doesn't matter . . . What do these lines mean? Why do they run in my head? My thoughts are all tangled.

[*Irina enters*]

OLGA. Be quiet, Masha. There's a good girl . . . Let's go in.

MASHA [*angrily*] I shan't go in there. [*Sobs, but controls herself at once*] I'm not going into the house, I won't . . .

IRINA. Let's sit here together and say nothing. I'm going away to-morrow . . . [*Pause*]

KULIGIN. Yesterday I took these whiskers and this beard from a boy in the third class . . . [*He puts on the whiskers and beard*] Don't I look like the German master? . . . [*Laughs*] Don't I? The boys are amusing.

MASHA. You really do look like that German of yours.

OLGA [*laughs*] Yes. [*Masha weeps*]

IRINA. Don't, Masha!

KULIGIN. It's a very good likeness . . .

[*Enter Natasha*]

NATASHA [*to the maid*] What? Mikhail Ivanitch Protopopoff will sit with little Sophie, and Andrei Sergeievitch can take little Bobby out. Children are such a bother . . . [*To Irina*] Irina, it's such a pity you're going away to-morrow. Do remain another week. [*Sees Kuligin and screams; he laughs and takes off his beard and whiskers*] How you frightened me! [*To Irina*] I've grown used to you and do you think it will be easy for me to part from you. I'm going to have Andrei and his violin put into your room — let him fiddle away in there! — and we'll put little Sophie into his room.

The beautiful, lovely child! What a little girlie! To-day she looked at me with such pretty eyes and said "Mamma!"

KULIGIN. A beautiful child, it's quite true.

NATASHA. That means I shall have the place to myself to-morrow. [*Sighs*] In the first place I shall have that avenue of fir-trees cut down, then the maples. It's so ugly at night . . . [*To Irina*] That belt doesn't suit you at all, dear . . . It's an error of taste. And I'll give orders to have lots and lots of little flowers planted here, and they'll smell sweet . . . Why is that fork lying here on the seat? [*Going towards the house, to the maid*] Why is that fork lying on the seat, I say? [*Shouts*] Don't you dare answer me!

KULIGIN. Temper! temper!

[*A march is played off; they all listen*]

OLGA. They're going.

[*Tchebutikin comes in*]

MASHA. They're going. Well, well . . . Bon voyage! [*To her husband*] We must go home . . . Where's my coat and hat?

KULIGIN. I took them in . . . I'll bring them, in a moment.

OLGA. Yes, now we can all go home. It's time.

TCHEBUTIKIN. Olga Sergeievna!

OLGA. What is it? [*Pause*] What is it?

TCHEBUTIKIN. Nothing . . . I don't know how to tell you . . . [*Whispers to her*]

OLGA [*frightened*] It can't be true!

TCHEBUTIKIN. Yes . . . such a story . . . I'm

tired, exhausted, I won't say any more . . . [*Sadly*] Still, it's all the same!

MASHA. What's happened?

OLGA [*embraces Irina*] This is a terrible day . . . I don't know how to tell you, dear . . .

IRINA. What is it? Tell me quickly, what is it? For God's sake! [*Cries*]

TCHEBUTIKIN. The Baron was killed in the duel just now.

IRINA [*cries softly*] I knew it, I knew it . . .

TCHEBUTIKIN [*sits on a bench at the back of the stage*] I'm tired . . . [*Takes a paper from his pocket*] Let 'em cry . . . [*Sings softly*] "Tarara-boom-deay . . ." Isn't it all the same!

[*The three sisters are standing, pressing against one another*]

MASHA. Oh, how the music plays! They are leaving us, one has quite left us, quite and for ever. We remain alone, to begin our life over again. We must live . . . we must live . . .

IRINA [*puts her head on Olga's breast*] There will come a time when everybody will know the reason for all this suffering, and there will be no more mysteries. But we must live . . . we must work, just work! Tomorrow I'll go away alone, and I'll teach and give my whole life to those who, perhaps, need it. It's autumn now, soon it will be winter, the snow will cover everything, and I shall be working, working. . . .

OLGA [*embraces both her sisters*] The bands are playing so gayly, so bravely, and one does so want to live!

Oh, my God! Time will pass and we shall forever be dead; they will forget our faces, voices, and even how many there were of us, but our sufferings will turn into joy for those who will live after us, happiness and peace will reign on earth, and people will remember with a good word and bless those who live now. Oh dear sisters, our life is not yet at an end. Let us live. The music is so gay, so joyful, and, it seems that in a little while we shall know why we are living, why we are suffering . . . If only we knew! if only we knew!

[*The music has been growing softer and softer; Kuligin, smiling happily, brings out the hat and coat; Andrei wheels out the perambulator in which Bobby is sitting*]

TCHEBUTIKIN [*sings softly*] "Tara . . . ra-boom-deay . . . [*Reads a paper*] It's all the same! It's all the same!

OLGA. If only we knew! If only we knew!

CURTAIN

UNCLE VANYA

BY

ANTON TCHEKHOFF

INTRODUCTION

"Uncle Vanya" is the second of the plays of Anton Tchekhoff to reach the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre. The story of the way it reached the hands of Stanislavsky and his artists and the connection it had with encouraging Tchekhoff to continue his literary efforts in the dramatic form are both of them interesting chapters not only in the annals of the Art Theatre but in the career of the playwright himself.

Long before the success of the revival of "The Sea Gull" during the first year of the Art Theatre had established Tchekhoff's fame as a dramatist, a play by the name of "The Demon" had issued from his pen and had found production in several unimportant provincial theatres. Rewritten and retitled, it had been submitted to the theatrical literary committee of the Small Imperial Theatre in Moscow where Tchekhoff's friends, Lyensky and Youzhin and the regisseur Kondratyeff, were working zealously for its acceptance.

Stanislavsky and his associates, on the other hand, were eager to add it to the growing repertory of the

Art Theatre under the spur of the acclaim "The Sea Gull" had achieved. Tchekhoff, however, had returned to Moscow in the spring of 1899 from his enforced winter exile in the Crimea too late to see "The Sea Gull" in performance. A close friendship sprang up between him and his interpreting artists, but he felt in duty bound to leave the new manuscript with the rival theatre. A solution of the dilemma soon appeared when the committee of the Small Imperial Theatre demanded certain changes in the third act. Tchekhoff refused to make any revisions, and the outcome of the impasse was that the Art Theatre snatched the manuscript as it stood, accepted it without question and hurried the play into rehearsal. On the night of November 7 (our calendar), 1899, therefore, "Uncle Vanya" as we know it today, was publicly performed for the first time on the stage with which Tchekhoff's fame as a playwright was so inextricably interwoven.

Meanwhile, during rehearsals, the author had returned to his southern retreat. A few days after the première, he wrote from Yalta to Mme. Knipper, who had created the rôle of Helena Andreievna and who was later to become his wife:

"The telegrams began coming in the evening when I was inbed. They send them on to me by telephone. I woke up every time and ran with bare feet to the telephone, and got very much chilled; then I had

scarcely dozed off when the bell rang again and again. It's the first time that my own fame has kept me awake. The next evening when I went to bed I put my slippers and dressing-gown beside my bed, but there were no more telegrams.

"The telegrams were full of nothing but the number of calls and the brilliant success, but there was a subtle, almost elusive something in them from which I could conclude that the state of mind of all of you was not exactly of the very best. The newspapers I have received today confirm my conjectures.

"Yes, dear actress, ordinary medium success is not enough now for all you artistic players: you want an uproar, big guns, dynamite. You have been spoiled at last, deafened by constant talk about successes, full and not full houses: you are already poisoned with that drug, and in another two or three years you will be good for nothing! So much for you!"

How far wrong Tchekhoff was as a forecaster of the future as well as he was in the rôle of judge of his own work, is seen from the fact that success did not prove insidious to the Art Theatre, and that any dubious note in the public reception of the new play soon vanished. It is a curious fact that in the quarter century of the Moscow Art Theatre, only two plays, aside from those with a spectacular appeal, have scored instantaneous and emphatic triumphs at their premières

—"An Enemy of the People" and Gorky's "The Lower Depths." Like so many other cherished favorites in the Art Theatre repertory, "Uncle Vanya" won its way slowly and unobtrusively but surely to the hearts of the theatre's patrons, and today, over two decades later, it still holds an enviable position.

It was "Uncle Vanya," too, which shares honors with "The Sea Gull" and with Hauptmann's "Lonely Lives" and Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" in the story of the persuasion of Tchekhoff to pursue further the craft of playwright. In the spring of 1900, the Art Theatre was writing to him for another manuscript. He refused, urged to that conclusion by lack of confidence in his powers. Thinking that perhaps this self-depreciation was due to the fact that he had never seen either "The Sea Gull" or "Uncle Vanya" on the stage, the entire Art Theatre company set out for the Crimea at the close of the spring season in Moscow, travelled south, met Tchekhoff at the dock at Sebastopol, gave eight performances there, proceeded to Yalta, where the playwright had built his own house with his own hands and had laid out his garden with the same personal care, and gave four more performances there.

In one of the souvenirs of Tchekhoff published by the Moscow Art Theatre several years ago, the statement is made: "The popularity of Tchekhoff in the Crimea was great without any theatre to increase it;

and here came the whole company of the theatre to which he was attached, to show their beloved author his own plays!"

The benign southern sun, the presence of Gorky in the entourage, just then blooming into prime literary fame, the close friendship between the two writers, the inspiration of the sea and the spring and the success of the creators of this youthful theatre—all combined to give Tchekhoff the necessary stimulus to carry on his labors.

THE EDITOR

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

ALEXANDER SEREBRYAKOFF — *A retired professor.*
HELENA ANDREIEVNA — *His wife, aged twenty-seven.*
SONYA — *His daughter by a previous marriage.*
MARIA VASSILIEVNA VOINITSKAYA —
Widow of a privy councilor, and mother of Serebryakoff's first wife.
IVAN (VANYA) VOINITSKY — *Her son.*
MIKHAIL ASTROFF — *A doctor.*
ILYA TELYEGIN — *An impoverished landowner.*
MARINA — *An old nurse.*
A WORKMAN.

The action takes place at Serebryakoff's country place.

ACT ONE.

A garden. Part of a house and terrace is seen. A table is set for tea in an avenue of trees, under an old poplar. Near the table are some benches and chairs. On one of them is a guitar. A swing is near the table. It is three o'clock in the afternoon of a cloudy day.

Marina, a quiet, gray-haired, little old woman, sits at the table knitting a stocking. Astroff is walking back and forth near her.

MARINA [*pouring tea into a glass*] Have some, little father?

ASTROFF [*taking the glass from her unwillingly*] I don't seem to care for any, somehow.

MARINA. Have a little vodka instead?

ASTROFF. No, I don't drink vodka every day. And, besides, it is too warm. [*A pause*] Tell me, nurse, how long have we known each other?

MARINA [*thoughtfully*] Let me see, how long is it? God only knows. You first came here, into our part of the world — let me see — when was it? Sonya's mother was still alive — two winters later she died;

that was eleven years ago — (*thoughtfully*) perhaps longer.

ASTROFF. Have I changed a great deal since?

MARINA. Oh, yes. You were good-looking and young, then, and now you are old and no longer good-looking. You drink, too.

ASTROFF. Yes, ten years have made another man of me. And why? Because I am overworked. Nurse, I am on my feet from morning until evening. I know no rest at all: at night I shake under my bedclothes for fear I'll be dragged out to visit some sick people. Ever since I've known you, I haven't had a single carefree day. How could I help growing old? Life is tedious, anyhow; it is a senseless, dirty business, and drags heavily. Every one in this neighborhood is silly, and after you live with them for two or three years you grow silly yourself. It is inevitable. [*Twisting his mustache*] See what a long mustache I have grown. A silly, long mustache. Yes, I am as silly as all the others, nurse, but not as stupid; no I have not grown stupid. Thank God, my brain is not muddled yet, though my feelings have grown dull. I ask for nothing, I need nothing, I love no one, except yourself alone. [*He kisses her head*] When I was a child, I had a nurse just like you.

MARINA. Don't you care for a bite to eat?

ASTROFF. No. During the third week of Lent, an epidemic of eruptive typhoid broke out at Malitskoi, and I was called there. The peasants were all stretched side by side in their huts, and the calves and pigs were running about the floor among the sick. How filthy it was, and such smoke! Beyond words! I slaved among those people all day. I hadn't a crumb to eat. But when I got home there was still no rest for me: a switchman was carried in from the railroad; I laid him on the operating table and he died in my arms under the chloroform. And then although my feelings should have been deadened, they rose again; my conscience tortured me as if I had murdered him. I sat down and shut my eyes — like this — and thought: will our descendants two hundred years from to-day, for whom we are breaking the path, remember us in a kindly spirit? No, nurse, they will forget.

MARINA. Man forgets, but God remembers.

ASTROFF. Thank you for that. You spoke the truth.

[*Enter Voinitsky from the house. He has been asleep after dinner and looks somewhat disheveled. He sits down on the bench and straightens his tie.*]

VOINITSKY. H'm. Yes. [*A pause*] Yes.

ASTROFF. Have you had a good nap?

VOINITSKY. Yes, very good. [*He yawns*] Ever since the Professor and his wife came, our daily life seems to have left its groove. I sleep at the wrong time, drink wine, and I eat all kinds of truck for dinner and supper. It isn't healthy. Sonya and I used to work together and we never had an idle moment. But now she works alone and I just eat and drink and sleep. Something is wrong.

MARINA [*shaking her head*] Such bedlam in the house! The Professor gets up at twelve, the samovar is kept boiling all morning, and everything has to wait for him. Before they came we used to dine at one, like everybody else, but now we dine at seven. The Professor sits up all night writing and reading, and suddenly, at two o'clock, the bell rings. Heavens, what's that? The Professor wants tea! Wake up the servants, light the samovar! Lord, what confusion!

ASTROFF. Will they remain here long?

VOINITSKY [*whistling*] A hundred years! The Professor has decided to make this his home.

MARINA. Just look here, for instance! The samovar has been on the table for two hours, and they are all out for a walk!

VOINITSKY. Never mind, don't get excited; here they come.

[*Voices are heard. Serebryakoff, Helena Andreievna, Sonya, and Telyegin enter from the depths of the garden, returning from their walk.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF. Superb! Superb! What glorious views!

TELYEGIN. They are marvelous, your Excellency.

SONYA. To-morrow we shall go in the woods, shall we, father?

VOINITSKY. Ladies and gentlemen, tea is served.

SEREBRYAKOFF. Won't you please send my tea into the library? I have some work to finish.

SONYA. I am sure you will love the woods.

[*Helena Andreievna, Serebryakoff and Sonya go into the house. Telyegin takes a seat at the table beside Marina.*]

VOINITSKY. There goes our learned scholar on a hot, sultry day like this, wearing overcoat, rubbers and gloves and carrying an umbrella!

ASTROFF. He is trying to take good care of himself.

VOINITSKY. How lovely she is! How lovely! Never in my life have I seen a more beautiful woman.

TELYEGIN. Do you know, Marina Timofeievna, that when I walk in the fields or in the shade of the garden, when I look at this table here, my heart swells with a great happiness. The weather is enchanting,

the birds are singing, we are all living in peace and contentment — what more can the soul desire? [*Takes a glass of tea*] Thank you with all my heart!

VOINITSKY [*dreaming*] Such eyes — a glorious woman!

ASTROFF. Come, Ivan, tell us something.

VOINITSKY [*indolently*] What shall I tell you?

ASTROFF. Haven't you any news for us?

VOINITSKY. No, it is all old. I am the same as ever, or perhaps worse, for I've become lazy. I do nothing any more but croak like an old raven. My mother, the old magpie, is still chattering about the emancipation of woman, with one eye on her grave and the other on her learned books, in which she is forever searching for the dawn of a new life.

ASTROFF. And the Professor?

VOINITSKY. The Professor as usual sits in his library from morning till night —

> "Straining our mind, wrinkling our brow,
> We write, write, write,
> With no respite
> Or hope of praise in the future or now."

Unfortunate paper! He ought to write his autobiography; he would make a really excellent subject for a book! Just consider, the life of a retired professor,

as stale as a piece of old bread, racked with gout, headaches and rheumatism, his liver bursting with jealousy and envy, living on the estate of his first wife, although he hates it, because he can't afford to live in town. He is everlastingly whining about his hard fate, although, as a matter of fact, he is unusually lucky. [*Nervously*] He is the son of a common deacon and has achieved the professor's chair, has become the son-in-law of a senator, is called "your Excellency," but never mind! I'll tell you something; he has been writing about art for twenty-five years, and he doesn't know the very first thing about it. For twenty-five years he has been hashing over the thoughts of other men on realism, naturalism, and all such nonsense; for twenty-five years he has been reading and writing things long known to clever men and uninteresting to stupid ones; for twenty-five years he has been pouring water from one empty tumbler into another. Yet consider the man's conceit and pretensions! He has been pensioned off. No living soul has ever heard of him. He is totally unknown. That means for twenty-five years he has been sailing under false colors. But look at him! He stalks across the earth like a demi-god!

ASTROFF. I believe you envy him.

VOINITSKY. Yes, I do. Look at the success he

has had with women! Don Juan himself was not more lucky. His first wife, my sister, was beautiful, gentle, as pure as the blue heaven above, noble, great-hearted, with more admirers than he has pupils, and she loved him as only creatures of angelic purity can love those who are as pure and beautiful as they are themselves. His mother-in-law, my mother, adores him to this day, and he still inspires her with a kind of worshipful awe. His second wife is, as you see, a great beauty; she married him in his old age and surrendered to him all the glory of her beauty and freedom. What for?

ASTROFF. Is she faithful to him?

VOINITSKY. Yes, worse luck!

ASTROFF. Why "worse luck"?

VOINITSKY. Because such loyalty is false and unnatural, root and branch. It sounds very well, but there is no logic to it. It is immoral for a woman to deceive an old husband whom she hates. But for her to stifle her pathetic youth and intense longings within her — that is not immoral!

TELYEGIN [*in a tearful voice*] Vanya, I don't like to hear you say such things. Listen, Vanya: every one who betrays husband or wife is faithless and would betray his country, too.

VOINITSKY [*cross*] Turn off the fountain, Waffles!

TELYEGIN. No, permit me, Vanya. My wife ran away with a lover the day after our wedding, because my appearance was unprepossessing. Since then I have never failed in doing my duty. I love her and am true to her to this day. I help her all I can and I've given my fortune to educate the children she had by her lover. I have lost my happiness but kept my pride. And she? Her youth has fled, her beauty has faded according to the laws of nature, and her lover is dead. What is there left to her?

[*Helena Andreievna and Sonya enter, followed by Maria Vassilievna carrying a book. The latter sits down and begins to read. Some one hands her a glass of tea which she drinks without looking up.*]

SONYA [*hurriedly, to the nurse*] Some peasants are waiting out there. Go and see what they wish. I shall pour the tea.

[*She pours out several glasses of tea. Marina goes out. Helena Andreievna takes a glass and sits in the swing drinking.*]

ASTROFF [*to Helena Andreievna*] I came to see your husband. You wrote me that he is very ill, that he has rheumatism and what not, but he seems as lively as a cricket.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. He had a fit of the blues last night and complained of pains in his legs, but he seems all right to-day.

ASTROFF. And I hurried here twenty miles at a break-neck gallop! Never mind, though, it isn't the first time. Now that I'm here, however, I'm going to stay until to-morrow and at any rate sleep *quantum satis.*

SONYA. Oh, splendid! You spend the night with us so seldom. Have you had your dinner?

ASTROFF. No.

SONYA. Good. You will have it with us. We dine at seven now. [*Drinks her tea*] This tea is cold!

TELYEGIN. Yes, the samovar has gone out.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Never mind, Ivan Ivanovitch, we'll drink our tea cold, then.

TELYEGIN. I beg your pardon, my name is not Ivan, but Ilyitch, ma'am — Ilya Ilyitch Telyegin, or Waffles, as they sometimes call me because of my pock-marked face. I am Sonya's god-father, and his Excellency, your husband, knows me very well. I now live with you on this estate, and perhaps you will be good enough to notice that I dine with you every day.

SONYA. Ilya Ilyitch is a great help to us; he is our right hand. [*Tenderly*] Dear god-father, let me pour you some more tea.

MARIA VASSILIEVNA. Oh! Oh!

SONYA. What is it, grandmother?

MARIA VASSILIEVNA. I forgot to tell Alexander — I am losing my memory — I received a letter today from Pavel Alexeievitch in Kharkoff. He sent me a new pamphlet.

ASTROFF. Is it interesting?

MARIA VASSILIEVNA. Yes, but odd. He refutes the very theories which he defended seven years ago. It is appalling!

VOINITSKY. There is nothing appalling about it. Drink your tea, mamma.

MARIA VASSILIEVNA. But I want to say something.

VOINITSKY. But that is all we have been doing these last fifty years, talking and talking and reading pamphlets. It's high time to have done with it!

MARIA VASSILIEVNA. It seems you never care to listen to what I have to say. Pardon me, Jean, but you have changed so this last year that I hardly know you. You used to be a man of stanch convictions and had an illuminating personality —

VOINITSKY. Oh, yes. I had an illuminating personality, which illuminated no one. [*A pause*] I had an illuminating personality! You couldn't say anything more cruel. I am forty-seven years old. Until last year I tried to let your pedantry blind my eyes to the truth in life. You yourself are blind! But

now — Oh, if you only knew! If you knew how I lie awake at night, heartsick and angry, to think how stupidly I wasted my time when I might have been wresting from life everything which my old age now forbids.

SONYA. Uncle Vanya, how dreary!

MARIA VASSILIEVNA [*to her son*] You speak as if your former convictions were to blame somehow, but you yourself, not they, were at fault. You have forgotten that a conviction, in itself, is nothing but a dead letter. You should have done something.

VOINITSKY. Done something! It isn't every man who is capable of being a *perpetuum mobile* with the pen like your Herr Professor.

MARIA VASSILIEVNA. What do you mean by that?

SONYA [*imploringly*] Grandmother! Uncle Vanya! I beg you!

VOINITSKY. I am silent. I apologize and am silent. [*A pause*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. What a fine day! Not too hot. [*A pause*]

VOINITSKY. A fine day to hang oneself.

[*Telyegin tunes his guitar. Marina appears near the house, calling the chickens.*]

MARINA. Chick, chick, chick!

SONYA. What did the peasants wish, nurse?

MARINA. The same old thing, the same old nonsense. Chick, chick, chick!

SONYA. Why do you call the chickens?

MARINA. The speckled hen disappeared with her chicks. I'm afraid the crows have got her.

[*Telyegin plays a polka. Every one listens in silence. A Workman enters.*]

WORKMAN. Is the doctor here? [*To Astroff*] Please, Mikhail Lvovitch, I've been sent for you.

ASTROFF. Where do you come from?

WORKMAN. The factory.

ASTROFF [*annoyed*] Thank you. I suppose I shall have to go whether I wish to or not. [*Looking around him for his cap*] Damn it, this is annoying!

SONYA. Yes, it is too bad, really. You must come back from the factory to dinner.

ASTROFF. No, I shan't be able to do that. It will be too late. Now where, where — [*To the Workman*] Look here, fellow, get me a glass of vodka, will you? [*The Workman goes out*] Where — where — [*Finds his cap*] There is a man in one of Ostrovsky's plays with a long mustache and short wits, like me. Let me bid you good-bye, though, ladies and gentlemen. [*To Helena Andreievna*] I should be really delighted if you came to see me some day with Sonya Alexandrovna. My place is small, but if you are interested

in such things, I'd like to show you a nursery and seed-bed, the like of which you'll not find within a thousand miles of here. My estate is surrounded by government forests. The forester is old and always ailing, so I oversee almost all of the work myself.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I have always heard that you were very fond of the woods. Of course you can do a great deal of good by helping to preserve them, but doesn't that work interfere with your real vocation? Why, you're a doctor!

ASTROFF. God alone knows what is a man's real vocation.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You find it interesting?

ASTROFF. Very.

VOINITSKY [*sarcastically*] Oh, extremely!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You are still young, not over thirty-six or seven, I should say, and I have an idea the woods do not interest you as much as you claim. I should think you would find them monotonous.

SONYA. No, the work is thrilling. Mikhail Lvovitch watches over the old woods and sets out new trees every year, and already he has received a diploma and a bronze medal. He sees to it that the old woods are not uprooted. If you'll listen to what he can tell you, you'll agree with him entirely. He

says that forests are the ornaments of the earth, that they teach man to understand beauty and to attune his mind to lofty views. Forests modify a stern climate, and in countries where the climate is milder, less energy is wasted in the struggle with nature, and the people are kind and gentle. The inhabitants of such countries are handsome, docile, sensitive, graceful in speech and in gesture. Their philosophy is gay, art and science flourish among them, their treatment of women is marked by charming kindliness.

VOINITSKY [*laughing*] Bravo! Bravo! All that is very pretty, but it sounds unconvincing. So, my friend [*to Astroff*], you must let me go on burning firewood in my stoves and building my barns of planks.

ASTROFF. You can burn peat in your stoves and build your barns of stone. Oh, I don't object, of course, to cutting wood when you have to, but why destroy the forests? The woods of Russia are trembling under the blows of the ax. Millions of trees have perished. The homes of the wild animals and the birds have been laid desolate; the rivers are shrinking, and many beautiful landscapes are gone forever. And why? Because men are too lazy and short-sighted to stoop and pick their fuel from the ground. [*To Helena Andreievna*] Am I not right? Who but a senseless barbarian could burn so much beauty in his stove and destroy what he cannot create

himself? Man has reason and creative energy so that he may increase his possessions. Until now, though, he has not created but destroyed. The forests are disappearing, the rivers are drying up, the game is being exterminated, the climate is spoiled and the earth becomes poorer and uglier every day. [*To Voinitsky*] I read irony in your eye; you do not take seriously what I am saying; and — and — perhaps I am talking nonsense. But when I cross peasant-forests which I have saved from the ax, or hear the rustling of the young trees which I have set out with my own hands, I feel as if I had had some small share in improving the climate, and that if mankind is happy a thousand years from now I shall have been partly responsible in my small way for their happiness. When I plant a young birch tree and see it budding and swaying in the wind, my heart swells with pride and I — [*Sees the Workman, who is bringing him a glass of vodka on a tray*] however — [*He drinks*] I must be off. Probably it is all nonsense, anyhow. Good-bye.

[*He goes toward the house. Sonya takes his arm and leaves wih him.*]

SONYA. When are you coming to see us again?

ASTROFF. I don't know.

SONYA. In a month?

[*Astroff and Sonya go into the house. Helena Andreievna and Voinitsky walk over to the terrace.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Ivan Petrovitch, you behaved shockingly again. What sense was there in teasing Maria Vassilievna and talking about *perpetuum mobile?* And at breakfast you quarreled with Alexander again. How petty it all is!

VOINITSKY. But suppose I hate him?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You hate Alexander without reason; he is like every one else, and no worse than you.

VOINITSKY. If you could only see your face, your gestures! Oh, how tedious your life must be!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Yes, it is tedious, and dreary, too! All of you abuse my husband and look on me with compassion; you think, "Poor woman, she is married to an old man." How well I understand your compassion! As Astroff said just now, see how thoughtlessly you destroy the forests, so that soon there will be no trees left. Thus also you destroy mankind, and soon loyalty and purity and self-sacrifice will have vanished with the woods. Why can't you look calmly at a woman unless she belongs to you? The doctor was right. You are all possessed by a devil of destructiveness; you pity neither the woods nor the birds nor women nor one another.

VOINITSKY. I don't like your philosophy.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. That doctor has a sensitive, weary face — an interesting face. Sonya evidently likes him; she is in love with him, and I can understand it. This is the third time he has been here since I have come, but I am shy and I have not had a real talk with him yet or showed him much attention. He thinks I am disagreeable. Do you know, Ivan Petrovitch, why you and I are such friends? I think it is because we are both lonely and unsympathetic. Yes, unsympathetic. Don't look at me that way, I don't like it.

VOINITSKY. How can I look at you in any other way since I love you? You are my joy, my life, my youth. I know that my chances of your loving me in return are infinitely small, that there are no chances, but I ask nothing of you. Only let me look at you, listen to you —

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Hush, some one will overhear you.

[*They go toward the house.*]

VOINITSKY [*following her*] Let me tell you of my love, do not drive me away. I have no other happiness!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. This is agony!

[*Both go into the house. Telyegin strums the strings of his guitar and plays a polka. Maria Vassilievna writes something on the leaves of her pamphlet.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT TWO.

The dining-room of Serebryakoff's house. It is night. The click of the Watchman's rattle is heard from the garden. Serebryakoff sits dozing in an arm-chair by an open window and Helena Andreievna, likewise half-asleep, is seated beside him.

SEREBRYAKOFF [*rousing himself*] Who is there? Is it you, Sonya?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. It is I.

SEREBRYAKOFF. Oh, it's you, Lenutchka. This pain is unbearable.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Your shawl has slipped. [*She wraps the shawl around his legs*] Let me shut the window.

SEREBRYAKOFF. No, leave it open; I am suffocating. Just now I dreamed that my left leg belonged to some one else, and it hurt so that I awoke. I don't believe this is gout; it is more like rheumatism. What time is it?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Twenty after twelve. [*A pause*]

SEREBRYAKOFF. I wish you'd look for Batushka's works in the library to-morrow. I think we have them.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. What did you say?

SEREBRYAKOFF. Look for Batushka to-morrow morning; we used to have him, I remember. Why do I find it so hard to breathe?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You are worn out; this is the second night you've been unable to sleep.

SEREBRYAKOFF. They say that Turgenieff got angina pectoris from gout. I'm afraid I'm getting it, too. Oh, damn this terrible, accursed old age! Ever since I've grown old, I have been hateful to myself, and, I'm sure, hateful to all of you, too.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You speak as if we were to blame for your age.

SEREBRYAKOFF. I am more hateful to you than to all the others.

[*Helena Andreievna gets up, walks away from him and sits down at a distance.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF. You are right, of course. I'm no idiot; I can understand. You are young and healthy and beautiful, and long for life, and I am an old dotard, almost a corpse. Don't I know it? I see, of course, that it's foolish for me to live so long, but wait!

I shall soon set you all free. My life can't drag on much longer.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You are exhausting me. For God's sake, be quiet!

SEREBRYAKOFF. It seems that everybody is being exhausted, thanks to me. Everybody is wretched; only I am blissfully triumphant. Oh, yes, of course!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Be quiet! You are torturing me.

SEREBRYAKOFF. I torture everybody. Of course.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*on the verge of tears*] This is unendurable! Tell me, what do you wish of me?

SEREBRYAKOFF. Nothing.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Then please be quiet.

SEREBRYAKOFF. It's funny that everybody listens to Ivan Petrovitch and his old idiot of a mother, Maria Vassilievna, but the moment I open my mouth, you all begin to feel abused. You can't even bear the sound of my voice. Suppose I am hateful, suppose I am a selfish tyrant, haven't I the right to be at my age? Haven't I deserved it? Haven't I, I ask you, the right to be respected, considering how old I am?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. No one is disputing your rights. [*The window slams in the wind*] The wind is rising, I must shut the window. [*She shuts it*] We

shall have rain in a moment. Your rights have never been questioned by anybody.

[*The Watchman in the garden clicks his rattle.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF. I spent my life working for the cause of learning. I am accustomed to my library and the lecture hall and to the regard and admiration of my colleagues. Now I suddenly find myself in this wilderness, condemned to see the same stupid people from morning till night and to listen to their silly futilities. I'm eager to live; I long for success and fame and the stir of the world, and here I am an exile! Oh, it is terrible to spend every moment grieving for a past that is lost, to witness the success of others and to sit here with nothing to do but fear death. I cannot stand it! It is more than I can endure. And you won't even forgive me for being old!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Wait; be patient; in four or five years, I shall be old myself.

[*Sonya comes in.*]

SONYA. Father, you sent for Dr. Astroff, and now you refuse to see him. It is not fair to trouble a man needlessly.

SEREBRYAKOFF. What do I care about your Astroff? He understands medicine about as well as I understand astronomy.

SONYA. We can't send for the whole medical faculty, can we, to cure your gout?

SEREBRYAKOFF. I refuse to talk to that madman!

SONYA. Do as you please. It's all one to me. [*She sits down.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF. What time is it?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. One o'clock.

SEREBRYAKOFF. It is stifling here. Sonya, hand me that bottle on the table.

SONYA. Here it is. [*She hands him a bottle of medicine.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF [*cross*] No, not that one! Can't you understand me? Can't I ask you to do a single thing?

SONYA. Please don't be moody with me. Some people may like it, but spare me, if you please, because I don't care for it. Besides, I haven't the time; we are cutting the hay to-morrow and I must get up early.

[*Voinitsky enters dressed in a long gown and carrying a candle.*]

VOINITSKY. A thunderstorm is approaching. [*The lightning flashes*] There it is! Go and get some sleep, Helena and Sonya. I have come to relieve you.

SEREBRYAKOFF [*frightened*] No, no, no! Don't

leave me alone with him! Oh, don't. He will begin lecturing me.

VOINITSKY. But you must allow them a little rest. They haven't slept for two nights.

SEREBRYAKOFF. Then let them go to bed, but you go away, too! Thank you. I beg you to go. For the sake of our former friendship, do not argue. We'll converse some other time —

VOINITSKY. Our former friendship! Our former —

SONYA. Hush, Uncle Vanya!

SEREBRYAKOFF [*to his wife*] Sweetheart, don't leave me alone with him. He will lecture me.

VOINITSKY. This is absurd.

[*Marina comes in carrying a candle.*]

SONYA. You must go to bed, nurse, it's late.

MARINA. I haven't cleared away the tea things. I can't go to bed yet.

SEREBRYAKOFF. No one can. They are all worn out. I alone enjoy perfect happiness.

MARINA [*going up to Serebryakoff and speaking tenderly*] What's the matter, little father? Does it hurt? My own legs ache, too, oh, so badly. [*She arranges the shawl around his legs*] You have had this illness for such a long time. Vera Petrovna, Sonya's late mother, used to sit up with you, too, and wear

herself out for you. She loved you dearly. [*A pause*] Old people like to be pitied as much as young ones, but somehow nobody cares about them. [*She kisses Serebryakoff's shoulder*] Come to bed, little father, let me give you some linden-tea and warm your poor feet. I shall pray to God for you.

SEREBRYAKOFF [*affected*] Let us go, Marina.

MARINA. My own feet ache so badly, oh, so badly! [*She and Sonya start leading Serebryakoff out*] Vera Petrovna used to wear herself out with sorrow and weeping. You were still small and foolish then, Sonya. Come, come, little father.

[*Serebryakoff, Sonya and Marina go out.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I am absolutely exhausted by him. I can hardly stand on my feet.

VOINITSKY. He exhausted you and I have exhausted myself. I haven't slept for three nights.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. There's something wrong in this house. Your mother hates everything but her pamphlets and the professor; the professor is vexed, he won't trust me and he fears you; Sonya is angry with her father and with me and hasn't spoken to me for two weeks; you hate my husband and openly sneer at your mother. I have reached the limit of my endurance. At least twenty times to-day, I've nearly

burst into tears. There's something wrong in this house.

VOINITSKY. Leave speculating alone.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You are cultured and intelligent, Ivan Petrovitch. Surely you understand that the world is not destroyed by criminals and fires, but by hate and malice and all this spiteful gossiping. Your duty is to make peace, and not to growl at everything.

VOINITSKY. First, help me to make peace with myself. My darling! [*He seizes her hand.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Let go! [*She drags her hand away*] Go away!

VOINITSKY. The rain will soon be over, and all nature will awake refreshed. Only I am not refreshed by the storm. Day and night I am haunted by the thought that my life is lost forever. My past doesn't count, because I frittered it away on trifles, and the present is so grotesque! What shall I do with my life and my love? What is going to become of them? This glorious feeling in my heart will be lost as a ray of sunlight is lost in a dark chasm, and my life will be lost with it.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. It's just as if I were benumbed when you speak to me of your love, and I don't know how to answer. Forgive me, I have nothing to say to you. [*She tries to leave*] Good-night!

VOINITSKY [*barring her way*] If you only knew how it tortures me to think that beside me in this house is another life that is being lost forever — yours! What are you waiting for? What accursed philosophy stands in your way? Oh, understand, understand —

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*looking at him intently*] Ivan Petrovitch, you are drunk.

VOINITSKY. Perhaps. Perhaps.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Where is the doctor?

VOINITSKY. In there. He is going to pass the night with me. Perhaps I am drunk, perhaps I am; nothing is impossible.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Have you been drinking together? What for?

VOINITSKY. Because in that way I get a taste of life. Let me do it, Helena!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You never used to drink. You never used to talk so much. Go to bed, I'm tired of you.

VOINITSKY [*falling on his knees before her*] My sweetheart, my precious —

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*angrily*] Leave me alone! Really, this has become too disagreeable. [*She leaves.*]

VOINITSKY [*alone*] She is gone! [*A pause*] It was ten years ago that I met her first, at her late sister's

home. She was seventeen and I thirty-seven. Why didn't I fall in love with her then and propose to her? It would have been so easy! And if I had, she would now be my wife. Yes, to-night's thunderstorm would have wakened us both. But I would have held her in my arms and whispered: "Don't be afraid! I am here." Oh, bewitching dream, so sweet that I smile when I think of it. [*He laughs*] God! My head reels! Why am I so old? Why won't she understand me? I despise all that rhetoric of hers, that indolent morality, that absurd talk about the destruction of the world — [*A pause*] Oh, how I have been deceived! For years I have worshiped that miserable gout-ridden professor. Sonya and I have milked this estate dry for his sake. We have sold our butter and curds and wheat like misers, and never kept a bit for ourselves, so that we could scrape together enough pennies to send to him. I was proud of him and his learning; I thought all his words and writings were inspired. And now? Now he has retired, and what is the grand total of his life? A blank! He is absolutely unknown, and his fame has burst like a soap-bubble. I have been deceived; I see that now, grossly deceived.

[*Astroff enters. He is wearing his coat but is without waistcoat or collar and is slightly drunk. Telyegin follows him, carrying a guitar.*]

ASTROFF. Play!

TELYEGIN. But everyone is asleep.

ASTROFF. Play!

[*Telyegin begins to play softly.*]

ASTROFF. Are you alone? No women around? [*Sings with his arms akimbo*]

"The room is cold, the fire is out.
Where shall the master find his rest?"

The thunderstorm woke me. It was a regular downpour. What time is it?

VOINITSKY. The devil only knows.

ASTROFF. I thought I heard Helena Andreievna's voice.

VOINITSKY. She was here a moment ago.

ASTROFF. What a beautiful woman! [*Looking at the bottles of medicine on the table*] Medicine, is it? What an assortment of prescriptions we have! From Moscow, from Kharkoff, from Tula! Why, he has been bothering every city in Russia with his gout! Is he really ill, or simply pretending?

VOINITSKY. He is really ill.

ASTROFF. What's the matter with you to-night? You seem gloomy. Is it because you feel sorry for the professor?

VOINITSKY. Leave me alone.

ASTROFF. Or are you in love with the professor's wife?

VOINITSKY. She is my friend.

ASTROFF. Already?

VOINITSKY. What do you mean by "already"?

ASTROFF. A woman can be a man's friend only after having first been his acquaintance and then his mistress — then she becomes his friend.

VOINITSKY. What coarse philosophy!

ASTROFF. What do you mean? Yes, I'll admit I'm growing vulgar, but then, you see, I'm drunk. Usually I drink like this only once a month. At such times my pluck and boldness know no bounds. I feel capable of anything. I attempt the most difficult operations and succeed magnificently. The most brilliant plans evolve in my brain. I'm no longer a poor simpleton of a doctor, but mankind's greatest benefactor. I work out my own system of philosophy and all of the rest of you seem to crawl at my feet like so many worms or microbes. [*To Telyegin*] Play, Waffles!

TELYEGIN. My dear fellow, I would with all my heart, but listen to reason; every one in the house is asleep.

ASTROFF. Play!

[*Telyegin plays softly.*]

ASTROFF. I want a drink. Come, we still have some brandy left. Then, as soon as morning comes, you'll go home with me.

[*Sonya enters and he catches sight of her.*]

ASTROFF. I beg your pardon, I haven't any collar on.

[*He departs hurriedly, followed by Telyegin.*]

SONYA. Uncle Vanya, you and the doctor have been drinking! Good fellows have been getting together! It's all very well for him, he's accustomed to doing it. But why follow his example? It's dreadful at your age.

VOINITSKY. Age hasn't anything to do with it. When the realities of life are missing, you must create illusions. That is better than nothing.

SONYA. All our hay is cut and rotting in these daily rains and here you waste your time creating illusions! You are neglecting the farm completely. I've done all the work by myself until I'm at the end of my strength — [*Frightened*] Uncle! Your eyes are full of tears!

VOINITSKY. Tears? Nonsense, there are no tears in my eyes. You looked at me then just as your dead mother used to, darling — [*He eagerly kisses her face and hands*] My sister, my dearest sister, where are you now? Ah, if you only knew, if you only knew!

SONYA. If she only knew what, Uncle?

VOINITSKY. My heart is bursting. It is dreadful. Never mind, though. I must go. [*He goes out.*]

SONYA [*knocking at the door*] Mikhail Lvovitch! Are you asleep? Please come here for a minute.

ASTROFF [*behind the door*] In a moment.

[*He appears presently, with his collar and waistcoat on.*]

ASTROFF. What do you wish?

SONYA. Drink as much as you please, if you don't find it disgusting, but I beg you don't let my uncle do it. It's bad for him.

ASTROFF. All right; we won't drink any more. I'm going home at once. That's settled. By the time the horses are harnessed, it will be dawn.

SONYA. It's still raining; wait until morning.

ASTROFF. The storm is over. This is only the final gust. I must go. And please don't ask me to visit your father any more. I tell him he has gout, and he insists it is rheumatsim. I tell him to lie down, and he sits up. To-day he actually refused to see me.

SONYA. He has been spoiled. [*Looking in the sideboard*] Won't you have a bite to eat?

ASTROFF. Yes, please, I think I will.

SONYA. I like to eat at night. I'm sure we shall find something here. They say he has made a great

many conquests in his life and the women have turned his head. Here is some cheese.

[*They stand eating by the sideboard.*]

ASTROFF. I haven't eaten a thing all day. Your father has a very peculiar character. [*Taking a bottle out of the sideboard*] May I? [*Pouring himself a glass of vodka*] We are alone here and I can speak frankly. Do you know, I couldn't bear to live in this house for even a month? This atmosphere would choke me. There is your father, wholly absorbed in his books and his gout; there is your Uncle Vanya with his hypochondria, your grandmother, and finally your step-mother —

SONYA. What about her?

ASTROFF. A human being should be beautiful in everything: in looks, in dress, in soul, in mind. Your step-mother, of course, is beautiful to gaze upon, but don't you see? She does nothing but sleep and eat and walk and charm us. That is all. She refuses all responsibilities, everything is done for her — am I not right? And an idle existence can never be clean. [*A pause*] Still, maybe I'm judging her too harshly. I'm discontented, like your Uncle Vanya, and so both of us are grumblers.

SONYA. Aren't you satisfied with life?

ASTROFF. I like life as life, but I hate and despise

to fritter it away in a little Russian village. As far as my personal existence is concerned — God! there is absolutely no redeeming feature! Haven't you noticed when you cross a dense forest at night and see a little light shining on ahead, how you forget your fatigue and the darkness and the sharp branches that lash your face? I work, you know that — like no one else in the country. Fate pursues me relentlessly; at times I suffer unbearably and I see no light ahead of me. I have no hope; I do not care for people. It is a long time since I have loved any one.

SONYA. You love no one?

ASTROFF. Not a soul. I feel only a kind of tenderness for your old nurse, for old-times' sake. The peasants are all alike; they are stupid and dirty. And the educated people are difficult to get along with. I am tired of them. All our friends are petty and shallow. They see no farther than their own noses; in a single word, they are dull. The ones who have brains are hysterical, consumed with a mania for analyzing themselves. They whine, they hate, they find fault everywhere. They crawl up to me on the sly, leer at me and say: "That fellow is crazy," "That man is a bag of wind." Or, if they don't know what else to call me, they say I am peculiar. I like the forests; that is peculiar. I don't eat meat; that is peculiar, too.

Simple, natural relations between man and man or between man and nature have no existence in their eyes.

[*He tries to take a drink; Sonya prevents him.*]

SONYA. I beg you, I implore you, don't drink any more!

ASTROFF. Why not?

SONYA. It is so unworthy of you. You are well-bred, your voice is tender, you are even — more than any one I know — handsome. Why do you wish to be like the common people who drink and play cards? Oh, don't, I beg you! You are always saying that people never create anything, but only destroy what nature has given them. Why do you insist on destroying yourself? Oh, don't, I implore you! I entreat you!

ASTROFF [*giving her his hand*] I won't drink any more.

SONYA. Promise.

ASTROFF. I give you my word of honor.

SONYA [*squeezing his hand*] Thanks!

ASTROFF. I'm through with it. You see, I'm perfectly sober again, and I shall remain so until the end of my life. [*He looks at his watch*] But, as I was saying, there is nothing for me in life; my race is over.

I am old, tired, unimportant; my feelings are dead. I could never again have any attachment for any one. I love no one, and — I never shall! Beauty alone still has the power to affect me. It moves me deeply. Helena Andreievna could turn my head in a day if she cared to, but that isn't love, nor affection — [*He shudders and covers his face with his hands.*]

SONYA. What is the matter?

ASTROFF. Nothing. During Lent one of my patients died on the operating table.

SONYA. It is time to forget that. [*A pause*] Tell me, Mikhail Lvovitch, if I had a friend or a younger sister, and if you knew that she, well — that she loved you, what would you do?

ASTROFF [*shrugging his shoulders*] I don't know. I don't suppose I'd do anything. I'd make her understand that I could not return her love — still, my mind does not bother itself with such affairs now. I must start at once if I am ever to go. Good-bye, dear girl. At this rate, we shall stand here talking till morning. [*Shaking hands with her*] I shall go out through the sitting-room, because I'm afraid your uncle might detain me. [*He goes out.*]

SONYA [*alone*] And he really said nothing! His heart and soul are still hidden from me, and yet for some reason I'm strangely happy. Why? [*Laughing*

with pleasure] I told him that he was well-bred and handsome and that his voice was tender. Was that wrong? I can still feel his voice throbbing in the air; it caresses me. [*Wringing her hands*] Oh, how frightful it is to be ugly! I am ugly, I know it. Last Sunday as I was coming out of church, I overheard a woman say, "She is a dear, noble girl, but what a pity she is so ugly!" So ugly!

[*Helena Andreievna enters and throws open the window.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. The storm has passed. What wonderful air! [*A pause*] Where is the doctor?

SONYA. He has gone.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Sonya!

SONYA. Yes?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. How much longer are you going to sulk? We have done each other no harm. Why should we be enemies? We have had enough of this.

SONYA. I myself — [*Embracing Helena Andreievna*] Let us make peace.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. With all my heart. [*They are both affected.*]

SONYA. Has father gone to bed?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. No, he is sitting up in the drawing-room. Heaven knows why we haven't been

on speaking terms with each other for weeks. [*Seeing the open sideboard*] Who left the sideboard open?

SONYA. Mikhail Lvovitch has just had supper.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Here is some wine. Let's seal our friendship.

SONYA. Yes, let's.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Out of one glass. [*Filling a wine-glass*] We are friends, aren't we?

SONYA. Yes. [*They drink and kiss each other*] I have wished to make friends for so long, but somehow I was ashamed to. [*She weeps.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Why do you weep?

SONYA. I don't know. Never mind.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. There, there, don't cry. [*She weeps*] Silly! Now I am crying, too. [*A pause*] You're angry with me because you think I married your father for his money, but don't put any trust in the tales you hear. I swear to you I married him for love. I was fascinated by his fame and his learning. I know now that it wasn't real love, but it seemed real enough at the time. I am innocent, and yet ever since my marriage your sharp suspicious eyes have been accusing me of an imaginary crime.

SONYA. Let's forget the past.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You mustn't look at people that way. It isn't right. You must trust people, or life becomes impossible. [*A pause.*]

SONYA. Tell me, truthfully, as a friend, are you happy?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Truthfully, no.

SONYA. I knew it. One more question: would you like your husband to be young?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. What a child you are! Of course I would. Go on, ask me something else.

SONYA. Do you like the doctor?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Yes, very much, indeed.

SONYA [*laughing*] I have a stupid face, haven't I? He has just left, and his voice still rings in my ears; I can hear his step; I can see his face in the window. Let me speak out all that I have in my heart! But no, I can't say it so publicly. I am ashamed. Come to my room and let me tell you there. I seem silly to you, don't I? Tell me about him!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. What can I tell you?

SONYA. He is clever. He can do everything. He can heal the sick, and plant forests.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. It isn't a question of medicine and trees, my dear. He is a man of genius. Do you realize what that means? It means he is coura-

geous, deep and clear of vision. He plants a tree and his mind swings a thousand years into the future and he sees dreams of the happiness of the human race. People like him are rare and ought to be loved. What if he does drink and use rough words at times? In Russia, a man of genius cannot be a saint. There he lives, cut off from the world by frost and storm and trackless muddy roads, surrounded by coarse people who are crushed by poverty and disease. His life is one endless struggle, with never a day's respite. How can a man live like that for forty years and stay sober and unspotted? [*Kissing Sonya*] With all my heart, I wish you happiness; you deserve it. [*Getting up*] As for me, I am a worthless, futile woman. Always I have been futile; in music, in love, in my husband's home — to be brief, in everything. When you stop to think of it, Sonya, I am really very, very unhappy. [*Walking excitedly back and forth*] I can never achieve happiness in this world. Never. Why do you laugh?

SONYA [*laughing and putting her hands over her face*] I am so happy, so happy!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I wish I could hear some music. I might play a little.

SONYA. Oh, do, do! [*Embracing her*] I couldn't possibly go to sleep now. Do play!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Yes, I will. Your father is still awake. Music annoys him when he is ill, but if he says I may, then I shall play a little. Go and ask him, Sonya.

SONYA. All right.

[*She goes out. The sound of the Watchman's rattle comes from the back yard.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. It's a long time since I've heard music. And now, I shall sit and play and cry like a simpleton. [*Calling out of the window*] Yefim, is that you out there with your rattle?

VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN. Yes.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Don't make so much noise. Your master is ill.

VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN. I'm off right away. [*He whistles a tune.*]

SONYA [*returning*] He says "No."

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT THREE.

The drawing-room of Serebryakoff's house. There are doors right, left and center. It is early afternoon. Voinitsky and Sonya are seated. Helena Andreievna walks back and forth, deep in thought.

VOINITSKY. The Herr Professor has deigned to express the wish that we all gather in the drawing-room at one o'clock. [*Looking at his watch*] It is now a quarter to one. He has a message to convey to the world.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. It's probably a question of business.

VOINITSKY. He never has any business. He writes nonsense, grumbles and eats out his heart with jealousy; that's all he does.

SONYA [*reproachfully*] Uncle!

VOINITSKY. Very well. I beg your pardon. [*Pointing to Helena Andreievna*] Look at her. Roaming up and down out of sheer idleness. A pretty picture, I must say!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I'm surprised that it doesn't bore you to strum on the same note from morning to night. [*With despair*] This tedium is killing me. What shall I do?

SONYA [*shrugging her shoulders*] There is plenty to do if you wish to.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. For instance?

SONYA. You could help run this estate, teach the children, look after the sick — isn't that enough? Before you and father came, Uncle Vanya and I used to take the grain to market ourselves.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I know nothing about such matters, and, besides, I'm not interested in them. Only in sentimental novels do women go out and teach and look after sick peasants; how can I start in doing it all of a sudden?

SONYA. How you can live here and not do it, is what I fail to understand. Be patient and you'll get used to it. [*Embracing her*] Don't be melancholy, dearest. [*Laughing*] You feel out-of-sorts and restless and unable, somehow, to fit into this life, and your restlessness is infectious. Look at Uncle Vanya, he does nothing now but trail you like a shadow, and I have given up my work to-day to come here and talk with you. I'm getting lazy and losing interest in my work. Dr. Mikhail Lvovitch hardly ever came here;

it was all we could do to induce him to visit us once each month, and now he has given up his forestry and his medicine, and comes every day. You must be a witch.

VOINITSKY. Why should you pine away here? Come, my darling, my sweetheart, be sensible! A mermaid's blood runs in your veins. Why don't you behave like one? Give your nature free rein for once in your life; fall heels over head in love with some other water sprite, and plunge headlong into a deep pool, so that the Herr Professor and all the rest of us may be free again.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*in anger*] Leave me alone! How brutal you are! [*She tries to leave.*]

VOINITSKY [*preventing her*] There, there, my darling, I apologize. Forgive me. [*He kisses her hand*] Peace!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Admit that you would try the patience of a saint.

VOINITSKY. As a peace offering, I'm going to bring you some flowers I picked for you this morning; some autumn roses, glorious, melancholy roses. [*He leaves.*]

SONYA. Autumn roses, glorious, melancholy roses!

[*She and Helena Andreievna stand at the window looking out.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. September already! How are we going to live through the long winter here? [*A pause*] Where is the doctor?

SONYA. He's in Uncle Vanya's writing-room. I'm glad Uncle Vanya has left. I'd like to talk to you about something.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. About what?

SONYA. About what? [*She puts her head on Helena Andreievna's breast.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*caressing her hair*] There, there! Don't, Sonya.

SONYA. I am ugly!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You have beautiful hair.

SONYA. Don't say that! [*Turning to look at herself in the glass*] No, when a woman is ugly, they always say that she has beautiful hair or eyes. For six years now I have loved him; I have loved him more than you can love your own mother. Every second, I seem to hear him by my side. I feel his hand press mine. I watch the door all the time, imagining I can hear his footsteps. And — don't you see? — I run to you just to talk about him. Every day now he comes here, but he never looks at me, he doesn't even notice my presence. It is heart-breaking. I have absolutely no hope, no hope. [*In despair*] God! Give me strength to endure. All last night I prayed. Often

I go up to him and speak to him and look into his eyes. My pride is gone. I no longer have the strength to control myself. Yesterday I told Uncle Vanya that I love him. I couldn't help it. And all the servants know it. Every one knows that I love him.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Does he?

SONYA. No, he never pays any attention to me.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*thoughtfully*] He is a strange man. Listen, Sonya, will you permit me to speak to him? I shall be careful and hint gently. [*A pause*] Really, to live in such uncertainty all these years! Let me do it!

[*Sonya nods affirmatively.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Excellent! It will be easy to find out whether or not he loves you. Don't be ashamed, darling, don't worry. I shall be careful; he won't have the least suspicion. We only wish to find out whether it is yes or no, don't we? [*A pause*] And if it is no, then he must stay away from here, isn't that right?

[*Sonya nods.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. It would be easier not to see him any more. We won't delay this an instant. He said he had a sketch to show me. Go and tell him at once that I wish to see him.

SONYA [*greatly excited*] Will you tell me the whole truth?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Of course I will. I'm sure that whatever it is, it will be easier to endure than this uncertainty. Trust me, dearest.

SONYA. Yes, yes. I shall say that you wish to see his sketch. [*She starts to go, but stops near the door and looks back*] No, it is better not to know — and yet — maybe there's hope.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. What are you saying?

SONYA. Nothing. [*She leaves.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*alone*] There is nothing worse than to know the secret of another human being, and to realize there's nothing you can do to help them. [*In deep thought*] Obviously, he is not in love with her. But why shouldn't he marry her? She isn't pretty, but she is so clever and pure and good that she would make an excellent wife for a country doctor of his years. [*A pause*] I can feel for the poor child. Here she lives in this desperate loneliness with no one about her except these gray shadows who do nothing but eat, drink, sleep and talk nonsense. Among them from time to time appears this Dr. Astroff, so different, so handsome, so entertaining, so fascinating. It is like seeing the moon rise on a dark night. Oh, to surrender yourself, body and soul, to such a man! Even

I am a little in love with him! Yes, without him I am lonely; when I think of him, I smile. Uncle Vanya says I have the blood of a mermaid in my veins: "For once in your life, give free rein to your nature!" Perhaps I should. Oh, to be free as a bird, to fly away from all those drowsy faces and their monotonous chatter and forget that they have existed at all! But I am cowardly; I am afraid; my conscience tortures me. He comes here every day now. I can guess why, and already I feel guilty; I should like to fall on my knees at Sonya's feet and beg her to forgive me and weep.

[*Astroff enters carrying a portfolio.*]

ASTROFF. Good afternoon! [*Shaking hands with her*] Do you wish to see my sketch?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Yes, you promised you'd show me what you had been doing. Have you time now?

ASTROFF. Of course!

[*He lays the portfolio on the table, takes out a sketch and attaches it to the table with thumb-tacks.*]

ASTROFF. What was your birthplace?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*helping him out*] In Petersburg.

ASTROFF. And where were you educated?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. At the Conservatory there.

ASTROFF. I don't suppose you find this life very interesting.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Oh, why not? It's true I don't know the country very well, but I've read a great deal about it.

ASTROFF. I have my own desk there in Ivan's room. When I'm simply too worn out to go on with my work, I drop everything and rush over here to forget myself in this pastime for an hour or two. Ivan Petrovitch and Sonya Alexandrovna rattle away at their counting frames, I feel warm and peaceful, the cricket chirps, and I sit near them at my table and paint. But I don't indulge in this luxury very often, only about once a month. [*Pointing to the picture*] Look! This is a survey map of our country as it was fifty years ago. The green tints, both light and dark, stand for forests. Half the map, you see, is covered with them. Where the green is striped with red, the forests were stocked with elk and wild goats. Here in this lake were great flocks of swans and geese and ducks; as the old men say, there was a power of birds of every kind. Now they have vanished like a mist. Beside the towns and villages, you see, I have jotted down here and there the various settlements, farms, hermits' caves and water-mills. This country was rich in cattle and horses, as you can see by the expanse of blue. For instance, see

how it deepens in this part; there were great herds of them here, an average of three horses to every house. [*A pause*] Now, look lower down. This is the country as it was twenty-five years ago. Only a third of the map now is green with forests. There are no goats remaining and no elk. The green and blue are lighter, and so on and so forth. Now, we come to the third diagram, our country as it is to-day. Still we see spots of green, but very little. The elk, the swans, the black-cock have disappeared. On the whole, it is the picture of a continuous and slow decline which will evidently come to completion in about ten or fifteen years. Perhaps you may object that it is the march of progress, that the old order must give way to the new, and you would be right if roads had been built through these ruined forests, or if factories and schools had taken their place. Then the people would have become better educated and healthier and richer, but as it is, we have nothing of the kind. We have the same swamps and mosquitoes; the same disease and misery: typhoid, diphtheria, fires. The degradation of our country confronts us, brought on by the human race's fierce struggle for existence. It is all the result of the ignorance and heedlessness of starving, shivering, ill humanity. To save our children, we snatch instinctively at everything that can warm us and satisfy our hunger. Therefore we consume everything on which

we can lay our hands, without a thought for the future. And so almost everything has been destroyed and nothing created to take its place. [*Coldly*] But I see by your expression that it does not interest you.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I know so little about such things!

ASTROFF. There's nothing to know. It simply isn't interesting, that's all.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Frankly, my thoughts were elsewhere. Forgive me! I must ask you something, but I'm embarrassed and I don't know how to begin.

ASTROFF. Ask me something?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Yes, quite an innocent question. Sit down. [*They both sit*] It's about a young girl I know. Let's discuss it like honest people, like friends, and then forget what will have passed between us, shall we?

ASTROFF. All right.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. It's about my step-daughter, Sonya. Do you like her?

ASTROFF. Yes, I respect her.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Do you like her — as a woman?

ASTROFF [*slowly*] No.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. One word more and that will be the last. You have noticed nothing?

ASTROFF. No, nothing.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*taking his hand in hers*] You don't love her. I see it in your eyes. She is suffering. You must understand that and not come here any more.

ASTROFF. I am rather too old for — and anyhow, I haven't the time. [*Shrugging his shoulders*] When could I? [*Embarrassed.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Bah! What a disgusting conversation. I am as breathless as if I had been running three miles uphill. Thank heaven, that is done with. Now let us forget everything that has been said. But you must leave at once. You are sensible. You understand. [*A pause*] I am actually blushing.

ASTROFF. If you had spoken a month or two ago, perhaps I might have considered it, but now — [*Shrugging his shoulders*] Of course, if she is suffering — but I can't understand your reasons for putting me through this examination. [*Searching her face with his eyes and shaking his finger at her*] Oho, you are shrewd!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. What do you mean?

ASTROFF [*laughing*] You are a shrewd one! I admit that Sonya is suffering, but why do you cross-question me? [*Preventing her from answering and going on quickly*] Please don't look so surprised; you know perfectly well why I come here every day. Yes, you know perfectly why and for whose sake I come!

Oh, my little bird of prey! don't look at me in that way; I am an old sparrow!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*perplexed*] Bird of prey? I don't understand.

ASTROFF. Beautiful, fluffy bird of prey, you must have your victims! For an entire month, I have done nothing but hunt you eagerly. I have cast aside everything for you, and it pleases you to see it. Now then, I'm sure you knew all this without submitting me to that cross-examination. [*Crossing his arms and bowing his head*] I yield I am yours — now, eat me!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA You have gone insane!

ASTROFF [*laughing ironically*] You are afraid!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I am a better and a stronger woman than you think me. I swear to you! [*She tries to leave the room.*]

ASTROFF [*barring her way*] I'll go away to-day. I shan't come here any more. But — [*Taking her hand and glancing about*] — for the future — where are we going to meet? Tell me quickly, where? Some one may come in. Tell me quickly! — [*Passionately*] You are so gloriously beautiful! — Just one kiss — let me kiss your fragrant hair!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I swear to you!

ASTROFF. Why swear? You must not! Let us not waste words! Ah, how lovely you are — what hands! [*Kissing her hands.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Enough! Go away! [*Freeing her hands*] You are forgetting yourself!

ASTROFF. Tell me! Tell me! Where will we meet to-morrow? [*Putting his arms around her*] Don't you see! We must meet! It is inevitable.

[*He kisses her. Voinitsky comes in carrying a bunch of roses, and halts in the doorway.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*without seeing Voinitsky*] Have pity! Leave me! [*She lays her head on Astroff's shoulder*] Don't! [*She tries to break away from him.*]

ASTROFF [*holding her round the waist*] Be in the forest to-morrow at two. Yes! Will you come?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*seeing Voinitsky*] Let me go! [*Breaking free and going to the window deeply embarrassed*] This is dreadful!

VOINITSKY [*throwing the flowers on a chair, speaking in great excitement and wiping his face with his handkerchief*] Nothing — yes, yes, nothing.

ASTROFF [*sulking*] It's a fine day, my dear Ivan Petrovitch. This morning, the sky was overcast and it looked like rain, but now the sun is shining again. After all, we've had a very fine autumn, and the wheat

crop looks unusually promising. [*Putting his map back into the portfolio*] But the days are growing short.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*quickly approaching Voinitsky*] You must do your best; you must use all the power you have to get my husband and myself away from here to-day! Do you hear? I say, to-day!

VOINITSKY [*wiping his face*] Oh! Ah! Oh! Very well! I — Helena, I saw everything!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*greatly agitated*] Do you hear me? I must leave here this very day!

[*Serebryakoff, Sonya, Marina and Telyegin enter.*]

TELYEGIN. I'm not feeling very well myself, your Excellency. I've been lame for two days, and my head —

SEREBRYAKOFF. Where are the rest? I hate this house. It is a regular labyrinth. Every one is always scattered through its twenty-six huge rooms. You can never find a soul. [*Ringing*] Ask Maria Vassilievna and Helena Andreievna to come here!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I am here.

SEREBRYAKOFF. Please sit down, all of you.

SONYA [*going up to Helena Andreievna and asking anxiously*] What did he say?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I'll tell you later.

SONYA. You are all upset. [*Looking swiftly and with inquiry into her face*] I understand; he said he

would not come here any more. [*A pause*] Tell me, did he?

[*Helena Andreievna nods.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF [*to Telyegin*] After all, one can become reconciled to being an invalid, but not to this life in the country. I feel as if I had been tossed from this earth and dumped on a strange planet. Please be seated, ladies and gentlemen. Sonya! [*She does not hear. She stands with her head sadly bent forward.*] Sonya! [*A pause*] She does not hear me. [*To Marina*] You sit down, too, nurse. [*Marina takes a seat and resumes knitting her stocking*] I bespeak your indulgence, ladies and gentlemen; check your ears, if I may put it so, at the hat-rack of attention. [*He laughs.*]

VOINITSKY [*in agitation*] Perhaps I'm not needed — may I be excused?

SEREBRYAKOFF. No, you are needed now more than any one else.

VOINITSKY. What do you wish?

SEREBRYAKOFF. You — but what makes you so angry? If it is anything I have done, I beg your forgiveness.

VOINITSKY. Oh, forget that and come to the point; what do you wish?

[*Maria Vassilievna enters.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF. Here is mother. Ladies and gentlemen, I shall begin. I have asked you to gather here, my friends, to inform you that the inspector general is coming. All jokes aside, though, I wish to discuss a very important matter. I must ask you for your aid and advice, and realizing your unflagging cordiality, I believe I can count on both. I am a book-worm and a scholar, and I am not familiar with practical affairs. I am unable, I find, to dispense with the help of well-informed people such as you, Ivan Petrovitch, and you, Ilya Ilyitch, and you, mother. The truth is, *manet omnes una nox,* that is to say, our lives rest in the hands of God, and as I am old and ill, I realize that the time has come for me to dispose of my property in the interests of my family. My life is nearly finished, and I am not thinking of myself, but I must consider my young wife and daughter. [*A pause*] I cannot go on living in the country; we were not intended for country life. And yet, we cannot afford to live in town on the income derived from this estate. We might sell the forests, but that would be an expedient to which we could not resort every year. We must work out some method of guaranteeing ourselves a certain more or less fixed annual income. With this object in view, a plan has occurred to me which I now have the honor of proposing to you for your consideration. I shall give you only a rough outline, fore-

going all details. Our estate does not pay on an average more than two per cent. on the investment. I propose to sell it. If then we invest our capital in bonds, it will bring us four to five per cent., and we should probably have a surplus of several thousand rubles, with which we could buy a modest cottage in Finland —

VOINITSKY. Wait a moment! Repeat what you said just now; I don't believe I heard you quite right.

SEREBRYAKOFF. I said we would invest the money in bonds and with the surplus buy a cottage in Finland.

VOINITSKY. No, not Finland — you said something else.

SEREBRYAKOFF. I propose to sell this estate.

VOINITSKY. Aha! That was it! So you are going to sell the estate? Splendid! That is a rare idea! And what do you propose to do with my old mother and myself and with Sonya, here?

SEREBRYAKOFF. That will be determined in due course. We can't do everything at once.

VOINITSKY. Wait! It is clear that up to now I've never had an ounce of sense in my head. I have always been stupid enough to think that the estate belonged to Sonya. My late father bought it as a wedding gift for my sister, and as our laws were made for Russians and

not for Turks, I foolishly imagined that my sister's estate would pass on to her child.

SEREBRYAKOFF. Of course it belongs to Sonya. Has any one denied it? I don't wish to sell it without Sonya's consent; on the contrary, what I am doing is for Sonya's welfare.

VOINITSKY. This is wholly beyond comprehension. Either I have gone insane or — or —

MARIA VASSILIEVNA. Jean, don't contradict Alexander. Trust him; he knows better than we do what is right and what is wrong.

VOINITSKY. No! Give me some water. [*He drinks*] Go on! Say anything you like — anything!

SEREBRYAKOFF. I can't understand why you are so upset. I don't pretend that my scheme is ideal, and if you all object to it, I shall not insist. [*A pause.*]

TELYEGIN [*with embarrassment*] Not only do I feel a deep respect toward learning, your Excellency, but I am also drawn toward your culture by family ties. My brother Grigory's wife's brother, whom you may know; his name is Constantin Trofimovitch Lakedemonoff, and he used to be a magistrate —

VOINITSKY. Stop, Waffles. This is business; wait a moment, we'll talk of that later. [*To Serebryakoff*] There now, ask him what he thinks; this estate was purchased from his uncle.

SEREBRYAKOFF. Ah! Why should I ask questions? What good would it do?

VOINITSKY. The price was ninety-five thousand rubles. My father paid seventy and left a mortgage of twenty-five. Now listen! This estate could never have been bought if I had not renounced my inheritance in favor of my sister, whom I loved deeply — and what is more, I worked like an ox for ten years and paid off the mortgage.

SEREBRYAKOFF. I regret that I ever started this conversation.

VOINITSKY. Thanks entirely to my personal efforts, the estate has an absolutely clear title, and now, when I have grown old, you propose to chase me away!

SEREBRYAKOFF. I can't understand what you're driving at.

VOINITSKY. For twenty-five years I have managed this estate. I have sent you the proceeds from it like the most honest of servants, and you have never given me one single word of thanks for my pains, not one — neither in my youth nor now. You allowed me a meagre annual salary of five hundred rubles, a beggar's pittance, and you have never even thought of adding a ruble to it.

SEREBRYAKOFF. What did I know about such things, Ivan Petrovitch? I am not a practical man and

I don't understand them. You might have helped yourself to all you desired.

VOINITSKY. Yes, why didn't I steal? Don't you all despise me for not stealing? It would have been only fair, and I wouldn't be a poor man now.

MARIA VASSILIEVNA [*sternly*] Jean!

TELYEGIN [*in agitatoin*] Vanya, old man, don't talk like that. Why spoil such a pleasant relationship? [*Embracing him*] Do stop!

VOINITSKY. For twenty-five years I have been sitting here with my mother like a mole in a burrow. Every thought and hope we had was yours and yours alone. All day long we talked with pride of you and your work, and spoke your name with respect; our evenings we wasted reading your books and papers which my soul now detests.

TELYEGIN. Don't, Vanya, don't. I can't endure it.

SEREBRYAKOFF [*angrily*] What in the name of heaven do you desire, anyhow?

VOINITSKY. We used to consider you as a superman, almost, but now the scales have fallen from my eyes and I see you as you are! You write on art without knowing a thing about it. Those books of yours which I used to admire aren't worth a copper kopeck. You are a humbug!

SEREBRYAKOFF. Can't any one stop him? I'm going away!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Ivan Petrovitch, I command you to stop this instant! Do you hear me?

VOINITSKY. I refuse! [*Serebryakoff tries to escape from the room, but Voinitsky bars the door*] Wait! I have not finished yet! You have wrecked my life. I have never really lived. My best years have gone for nothing. They have been ruined, thanks to you. You are my bitterest enemy!

TELYEGIN. I can't stand it; I can't stand it. I'm going.

[*He leaves in great excitement.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF. But what do you wish of me? What earthly right have you to address me in such language? What a trifle! If this estate is yours, then take it, and let me be ruined; I don't care!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I shall leave this hell at once! [*Shrieking*] I can't bear it any longer!

VOINITSKY. My life has been a failure. I am clever and courageous and strong. If I had lived a normal life I might have become another Schopenhauer or Dostoievsky. I am losing my head! I am going insane! Mother, I am in despair! Oh, mother!

MARIA VASSILIEVNA [*sternly*] Listen, Alexander!

[*Sonya falls to her knees beside the nurse and clings to her.*]

SONYA. Oh, nurse, nurse!

VOINITSKY. Mother! What shall I do? No, don't speak! I know what to do. [*To Serebryakoff*] You will remember me!

[*He departs through the door in the center of the room and Maria Vassilievna follows him.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF. Tell me, what on earth is the matter? Take this lunatic out of my sight! I simply cannot live under the same room with him. [*Pointing to the center door*] His room is almost next door to mine. Let him remove into the village or into the wing of the house, or I shall leave here at once. I cannot remain in the same house with him.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*to her husband*] We are leaving to-day; we must prepare at once.

SEREBRYAKOFF. What a perfectly frightful man!

SONYA [*on her knees beside the nurse, turning to her father and speaking with emotion*] You must be kind to us, papa. Uncle Vanya and I are so unhappy! [*Controlling her despair*] Have mercy on us! Remember how Uncle Vanya and grandmother used to copy and translate your books for you every night — every night. Uncle Vanya has toiled without rest; we would never spend a penny on ourselves, but sent it all

to you! We earned every mouthful of bread that we ate! I am not speaking as I should like to, but you must understand us, papa, you must have mercy on us.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*much excited, to her husband*] For heaven's sake, Alexander, go and talk to him — explain!

SEREBRYAKOFF. Very well, I shall talk to him. I do not accuse him of anything, and I am not angry, but you must confess that his behavior has been strange, to say the least. Excuse me, I shall go to him.

[*He leaves through the center door.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Be gentle with him. Try to soothe him. [*She follows her husband out.*]

SONYA [*snuggling nearer to Marina*] Nurse, oh, nurse!

MARINA. It's all right, baby. When the geese have cackled they will be silent again. First they cackle and then they stop.

SONYA. Nurse!

MARINA [*caressing her hair*] You are trembling all over, as if you had a chill. There, there, little orphan, God is merciful. A little linden-tea, and it will all pass off. Don't cry, my sweet. [*Looking angrily at the center door*] See, the geese have all gone now. The devil take them!

[*A shot is heard. Helena Andreievna screams behind the scenes. Sonya shudders.*]

MARINA. Bang! What's that?

SEREBRYAKOFF [*reeling in, terror-stricken*] Hold him! Hold him! He has gone mad!

[*Helena Andreievna and Voinitsky struggle at the doorway.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*trying to snatch the revolver from him*] Give it to me; give it to me, I tell you!

VOINITSKY. Let me go, Helena, let me go! [*He frees himself and rushes in, searching everywhere for Serebryakoff*] Where is he? Ah, there he is! [*He shoots at him. A pause*] Didn't I get him? I missed again? [*Enraged*] Damnation! To hell with him!

[*He hurls the revolver to the floor and sinks helplessly into a chair. Serebryakoff stands stupefied. Helena Andreievna leans against the wall, half-fainting.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Take me away! Take me away! I can't stay here — I can't!

VOINITSKY [*despairingly*] What am I doing? What am I doing?

SONYA [*softly*] Oh, nurse, nurse!

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT III OF TCHEHOFF'S "UNCLE VANYA," AT THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

ACT FOUR.

Voinitsky's bed-room, which he also uses as his office. A large table is near the window; scattered over it are ledger, letter scales, and papers of all descriptions. Near by is a smaller table belonging to Astroff, with his paints and drawing materials. A cage hangs on the wall containing a starling. There is a map of Africa on the wall, obviously of use to no one. There is a large sofa covered with canvas. A door leads to the left into an inner room; one to the right leads into the front hall, and in front of this door is a mat on which the peasants clean their muddy boots. It is an evening in autumn. The stillness is complete. Telyegin and Marina sit facing each other, winding wool.

TELYEGIN. Hurry, Marina, or we shall be called away to say good-bye before you have finished. They have ordered the carriage already.

MARINA [*trying to wind more rapidly*] There isn't much left to wind.

TELYEGIN. They are going to Kharkoff to live.

MARINA. They're doing well to go.

TELYEGIN. They have been frightened. The professor's wife refuses to stay here an hour longer. "If we're going at all, let's be off," says she, "we shall go to Kharkoff and look around, and then we can send for our things." They're traveling light-handed. It seems, Marina, that fate decreed they should not live here.

MARINA. And quite rightly. What a storm they raised! It was a shame!

TELYEGIN. Yes, to be sure! The scene was worthy of the brush of Aibazovsky.

MARINA. I wish I'd never laid eyes on them. [*A pause*] Once more things will be as they used to be: tea at eight, dinner at one, and supper in the evening; everything in order as decent people and Christians like it. [*Sighing*] It is a long time since I, poor sinner, have eaten noodles.

TELYEGIN. Yes, we haven't had noodles for an age. [*A pause*] Not for ages. As I was passing through the village this morning, Marina Timofeievna, one of the shop-keepers, called after me, "Hi! you hanger-on!" I felt it bitterly.

MARINA. Don't pay a bit of attention to them, little father; we are all dependents on God. You,

Sonya, Ivan Petrovitch and myself — none of us sits idle; we all work. All! — Where is Sonya?

TELYEGIN. In the garden with the doctor, looking for Ivan Petrovitch. They are afraid he may lay violent hands on himself.

MARINA. Where is his revolver?

TELYEGIN [*whispering*] I hid it in the cellar.

MARINA [*amused*] Sinner!

[*Voinitsky and Astroff enter.*]

VOINITSKY. Let me alone! [*To Marina and Telyegin*] Go away! Go away and leave me to myself. Only for an hour! I won't have you watching me this way!

TELYEGIN [*going out on tip-toe*] Yes, yes, Vanya.

MARINA [*gathering up her wool and leaving*] The gander cackles; ho! ho! ho!

VOINITSKY. Leave me to myself!

ASTROFF. I would, with the greatest pleasure. I should have gone long ago, but I shan't leave you until you have returned what you took from me.

VOINITSKY. I took nothing from you.

ASTROFF. I'm not joking, don't detain me, I really have to go.

VOINITSKY. I took nothing of yours.

ASTROFF. You didn't? All right, I shall have to stay a while longer, and then with your permission I will have to resort to force. We shall have to bind you and search you. I mean what I say.

VOINITSKY. Do as you please. [*A pause*] Oh, to think I made such a fool of myself! To shoot twice and miss him both times! I shall never forgive myself.

ASTROFF. When you first felt the impulse to shoot, you might as well have put a bullet through your own head.

VOINITSKY [*shrugging his shoulders*] Strange! I attempted murder, and they're not going to arrest me or bring me to trial. That means they think I'm insane. [*Laughing bitterly*] I! I am insane, and the ones who hide their futility, their stupidity, their shrill cruelty behind a professor's mask, are sane! Those who marry old men and then betray them before the eyes of every one, are sane! I saw you kiss her; I saw you in each other's arms!

ASTROFF. Yes, sir, I did kiss her; and that's for you! [*Putting his thumb to his nose*]

VOINITSKY [*watching the door*] No, it is the earth that is insane, because it still suffers us to exist.

ASTROFF. That's nonsense.

VOINITSKY. Well? Am I not a lunatic, and therefore irresponsible? Haven't I the right to talk nonsense?

ASTROFF. This is a farce! You are not insane; you are simply a ridiculous fool. I used to think every fool was out of his senses, but now I see that lack of sense is the normal human state, and you are perfectly normal.

VOINITSKY [*covering his face with his hands*] Oh! If you knew how ashamed I am! There is nothing more dreadful under the sun than this bitter sense of shame. [*Agonized*] I can't endure it! [*Leaning against the table*] What can I do? What can I do?

ASTROFF. Nothing.

VOINITSKY. Tell me something! Oh, my God! I am forty-seven. I may live to be sixty; I still have thirteen years ahead of me — an eternity! How can I endure life for thirteen years? What shall I do? How can I fill them? Oh, don't you see? [*Pressing Astroff's hand convulsively*] Don't you see, if I could only live the rest of my life in some new manner! If I could only awake some still bright morning and feel that my life had begun all over; that the past was forgiven and had vanished like smoke. [*Weeping*] Oh, to begin life anew! Tell me, tell me, how to begin!

ASTROFF [*crossly*] Nonsense! What kind of a new life can you and I look forward to? We have no hope.

VOINITSKY. None?

ASTROFF. None. I am convinced of that.

VOINITSKY. Tell me what to do. [*Putting his hand to his heart*] I feel such a burning pain here.

ASTROFF [*shouting angrily*] Stop! [*More moderately*] It may be that our posterity, despising us for our blind and stupid lives, will find some path to happiness; but we — you and I — have but one hope, the hope that visions, pleasant ones, perhaps, may haunt us as we rest in our graves. [*Sighing*] Yes, brother, in this entire community there were only two decent and intelligent men, you and I. Ten years or so of this life of ours, this wretched life, have sucked us under, and we have become as contemptible and petty as the others. But don't try to talk me out of my purpose! Will you give me what you took from me?

VOINITSKY. I took nothing from you.

ASTROFF. You took a little bottle of morphine out of my medicine-case. [*A pause*] Listen! If you are positively determined to kill yourself, go into the woods and shoot yourself there. Give me back the

morphine, or there will be a lot of talk and suspicion; people will think I gave it to you. I don't relish performing a post-mortem on you. Do you think I'd find it interesting?

[*Sonya enters.*]

VOINITSKY. Leave me alone.

ASTROFF [*to Sonya*] Sonya, your uncle has stolen a bottle of morphine from my medicine-case and won't give it up. Tell him his behavior is — well, unwise. I haven't time, I must be going.

SONYA. Uncle Vanya, did you take the morphine?

ASTROFF. Yes, he took it. [*A pause*] I am absolutely sure.

SONYA. Give it up! Why do you wish to frighten us? [*Tenderly*] Give it up, Uncle Vanya! My sorrow is perhaps even keener than yours, but I am not in despair. I endure my grief and shall go on doing so until my life comes to its natural end. You must endure yours, too. [*A pause*] Give it up! [*Kissing his hands*] Dear, darling Uncle Vanya. Give it up! [*Weeping*] You are so good, I am sure you'll have pity on us and give it up. You must endure your grief, Uncle Vanya; you must endure it.

[*Voinitsky takes the bottle from the table drawer and gives it to Astroff.*]

VOINITSKY. There it is! [*To Sonya*] And now we must get busy at once; we must do something, or else I'll not be able to stand it.

SONYA. Yes, yes, let's work! As soon as we've seen them off, we'll go to work. [*Nervously she straightens out the papers on the table*] We have neglected everything!

ASTROFF [*putting the bottle in the case and strapping it*] Now I can go.

[*Helena Andreievna enters.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Are you here, Ivan Petrovitch? We are starting presently. Go to Alexander, he wishes to speak to you.

SONYA. Go, Uncle Vanya. [*Taking Voinitsky's arm*] Come, you and papa must make peace; that is absolutely necessary.

[*Sonya and Voinitsky depart.*]

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I am leaving. [*Giving Astroff her hand*] Good-bye.

ASTROFF. So soon?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. The carriage is waiting.

ASTROFF. Good-bye.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. You promised me that you, too, would go away to-day.

ASTROFF. I have forgotten. I am going immediately. [*A pause*] Were you afraid? [*Taking her by the hand*] Was it so terrifying?

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. Yes.

ASTROFF. Couldn't you stay? Couldn't you? To-morrow — in the forest —

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. No. Everything is settled, and that is why I can look you so squarely in the eyes. Our departure is fixed. One thing I must ask of you: don't think too harshly of me; I should like you to respect me.

ASTROFF. Ah! [*With an impatient gesture*] Stay, I beg you! Admit there's nothing for you to do in this world. You have no object in life; nothing to occupy your attention. Sooner or later your feelings will master you. It is inevitable. It would be better if it happened, not in Kharkoff or in Kursk, but here in the lap of nature. Here, at least, it would be poetic, even beautiful. Here you have the forests, the half-ruined houses of which Turgenieff writes.

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. How droll you are! I am angry with you and yet I shall always remember you with pleasure. You are interesting and original. You and I will never meet again, and so I shall tell you — why conceal it? — that I am just a little in love with you. Come, one last handclasp, and then let us

part good friends. Let us not bear each other any ill will.

ASTROFF [*pressing her hand*] Yes, go. [*Thoughtfully*] You seem sincere and good, and yet there is something strangely restless about your personality. The moment you and your husband arrived here, every one whom you found busy and engaged in active, creative work felt compelled to drop it and give himself up to your husband's gout and yourself for the entire summer. You and he have contaminated us with your idleness. I have been swept from my moorings; I haven't put my hand to a thing for weeks. Sickness has been running its course unchecked among the people, and the peasants have been using my forests and young plantations as a pasture for their cattle. Wherever you go, you and your husband will always carry destruction in your wake. I am joking, of course, and yet I am strangely convinced that if you had remained here, we should have been overtaken by the most terrible desolation. I would have perished, and you — no good would have come to you. So go! *E finita la comedia!*

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*snatching a pencil quickly from Astroff's table*] I shall keep this pencil in remembrance!

ASTROFF. How strange it is! We meet, and then all of a sudden it seems that we must part forever.

That is the way of the world. While we are still alone, before Uncle Vanya comes in with a bouquet — allow me — to kiss you good-bye — may I? [*Kissing her on the cheek*] There! Splendid!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA. I wish you every happiness. [*Glancing about her*] For once in my life, I scorn consequences! [*She kisses him impulsively, and they part quickly*] I must go.

ASTROFF. Yes, go. If the carriage is ready, then start at once. [*They stand listening*]

ASTROFF. *E finita!*

[*Voinitsky, Serebryakoff, Maria Vassilievna with her book, Telyegin and Sonya enter.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF [*to Voinitsky*] Shame on him who cannot forgive past offenses. I have passed through so much in the last few hours that I feel capable of writing for the benefit of posterity a whole treatise on how to live. I accept your apology gladly, and I myself ask your forgiveness. [*He kisses Voinitsky three times.*]

VOINITSKY. You will go on receiving your allowance regularly as before. Everything will remain as it was.

[*Helena Andreievna embraces Sonya.*]

SEREBRYAKOFF [*kissing Maria Vassilievna's hands*] Mother!

MARIA VASSILIEVNA [*kissing him*] Alexander! Have your picture taken again, and send it to me; you know how dearly I love you.

TELYEGIN. Good-bye, your Excellency. Don't forget us.

SEREBRYAKOFF [*kissing his daughter*] Good-bye, good-bye, every one. [*Shaking hands with Astroff*] Many thanks for your agreeable companionship. I have a deep regard for your opinions and your enthusiasm, but as an old man let me give you one piece of advice on parting: do something, my friend! Work! Do something! [*They all bow*] Good luck to you all.

[*He goes out followed by Maria Vassilievna and Sonya.*]

VOINITSKY [*fervently kissing Helena Andreievna's hand*] Good-bye — forgive me. I shall never see you again!

HELENA ANDREIEVNA [*touched*] Good-bye, dear boy.

[*She kisses his head lightly as he bends over her hand, and then goes out.*]

ASTROFF. Tell them to bring my carriage around, too, Waffles.

TELYEGIN. All right, little father.

[*Astroff and Voinitsky alone are left behind. Astroff gathers together his paints and drawing materials on the table and packs them away in his grip.*]

ASTROFF. Why don't you see them off?

VOINITSKY. Let them go! I — I can't go out there. I feel too sad. I must busy myself with something at once. To work! To work!

[*He rummages through his papers on the table. A pause. As the horses trot away, the tinkle of bells is heard.*]

ASTROFF. They have gone! The professor, I suppose, is glad to go. He couldn't be lured back by a fortune now.

[*Marina enters.*]

MARINA. They have gone. [*She sits down in her arm-chair and resumes her knitting. Sonya comes in drying her eyes.*]

SONYA. They have gone. God be with them. [*To her uncle*] And now, Uncle Vanya, let us do something!

VOINITSKY. To work! To work!

SONYA. It is a long, long time since you and I have sat together at this table. [*Lighting a lamp on the table*] No ink! [*Taking the ink-stand to the cupboard and filling it from an ink-bottle*] How sad it is to see them go!

[*Maria Vassilievna comes in slowly.*]

MARIA VASSILIEVNA. They have gone.

[*She sits down and immediately becomes absorbed in her book. Sonya sits at the table and looks through an account book.*]

SONYA. First, Uncle Vanya, let us add up the accounts. They are in a woeful state. They have again sent for a statement. Come. You take one and I'll take the other.

VOINITSKY. In account with — [*Writing*] — in account with —

MARINA [*yawning*] The sand-man has come.

ASTROFF. How silent it is. The pens scratch, the cricket chirps; it is so warm and comfortable. I hate to go.

[*The tinkling of bells is heard.*]

ASTROFF. My carriage has come. All that is left is to say good-bye to you, my friends, and to my table here, and then, — away! [*He puts the map in the portfolio.*]

MARINA. Don't hurry away; sit with us a little longer.

ASTROFF. Impossible.

VOINITSKY [*writing*] And carry forward from the old debt two seventy-five —

[*The Workman enters.*]

WORKMAN. Your carriage is waiting, sir.

ASTROFF. All right. [*He hands the Workman his medicine-case, portfolio and box*] Be careful, don't crush the portfolio!

WORKMAN. Very well, sir.

SONYA. When shall we see you again?

ASTROFF. Hardly before next summer. Probably not during the winter, at any rate. Though, if anything happens, let me know, and I'll come at once. [*Shaking hands*] Thank you for your hospitality, your kindness — for all you've done. [*He goes to the nurse and kisses her head*] Good-bye, old nurse.

MARINA. Are you going without your tea?

ASTROFF. I don't care for any, nurse.

MARINA. Won't you have a drop of vodka?

ASTROFF [*hesitatingly*] Yes, I might.

[*Marina goes out.*]

ASTROFF [*after a pause*] My off-wheeler has gone lame for some reason. I noticed it yesterday when Peter was watering him.

VOINITSKY. You should have him re-shod.

ASTROFF. I shall have to stop at the blacksmith's on my way home. It can't be helped. [*He stands looking up at the map of Africa on the wall*] I suppose it is roasting hot in Africa now.

VOINITSKY. Yes, I suppose it is.

[*Marina comes back carrying a tray with a glass of vodka and a slice of bread.*]

MARINA. Help yourself.

[*Astroff drinks.*]

MARINA. Your health! [*Bowing deeply*] Eat your bread with it.

ASTROFF. No, I like it this way. And now, good-bye. [*To Marina*] You needn't come out to see me off, nurse.

[*He leaves. Sonya follows him with a candle to light him to the carriage. Marina seats herself in her arm-chair.*]

VOINITSKY [*writing*] On the 2nd of February, twenty pounds of butter; on the 16th, twenty pounds of butter once more. Buckwheat flour — [*A pause. The tinkling of bells is heard.*]

MARINA. He has gone.

[*A pause. Sonya enters and sets the candle-stick on the table.*]

SONYA. He has gone.

VOINITSKY [*adding and writing*] Total, fifteen — twenty-five —

[*Sonya sits down and begins to write.*]

MARINA [*yawning*] Oh, ho! The Lord have mercy.

[*Telyegin enters on tip-toe, seats himself near the door, and begins to tune his guitar.*]

VOINITSKY [*to Sonya, caressing her hair*] Oh, my child, I am so wretched; if you only knew how wretched I am!

SONYA. What can we do? We must live out our lives. [*A pause*] Yes, we shall live, Uncle Vanya. We shall live all through the endless procession of days ahead of us, and through the long evenings. We shall bear patiently the burdens that fate imposes on us. We shall work without rest for others, both now and when we are old. And when our final hour comes, we shall meet it humbly, and there beyond the grave, we shall say that we have known suffering and tears, that our life was bitter. And God will pity us. Ah, then, dear, dear Uncle, we shall enter on a bright and beautiful life. We shall rejoice and look back upon our grief here. A tender smile — and — we shall rest. I have faith, Uncle, fervent, passionate faith. [*Sonya kneels down in front of her Uncle and lays her head in his hands. She speaks with a weary voice*] We shall rest. [*Telyegin plays softly on his guitar*] We shall rest. We shall hear the angels. We shall see heaven shining like a jewel. We shall see evil and all our pain disappear in the great pity that shall enfold the world. Our life will be as peaceful and gentle and sweet as a caress. I have

faith; I have faith. [*Wiping away her tears*] My poor, poor Uncle Vanya, you are crying! [*Weeping*] You have never known what it is to be happy, but wait, Uncle Vanya, wait! We shall rest. [*Embracing him*] We shall rest. [*The Watchman's rattle is heard from the garden; Telyegin plays softly; Maria Vassilievna writes on the margin of her pamphlet; Marina is knitting her stocking*] We shall rest.

THE CURTAIN SLOWLY FALLS.

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